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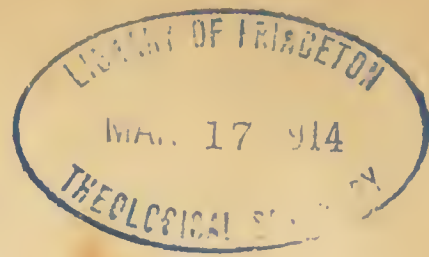
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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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BODY OF DIVINITY:

WHEREIN THE

DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

ARE EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL LECTURES ON THE ASSEMBLY'S
LARGER CATECHISM.

BY THOMAS [✓]RIDGELEY, D.D.

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BY THE REV. JOHN M. WILSON.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

QUESTIONS LXI, LXII, LXIII, LXIV.

	Page
THE CHURCH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE,	1
The meaning of the word Church,	1
The meaning of the phrases, 'the Visible' and 'the Invisible Church,'	4
The invisible church,	5
The visible church,	7
The church under the Mosaic dispensation,	10
The church under the ministry of the Apostles,	13
The nature and government of the Christian church,	15
NOTES.—Various significations of the word 'Church,'	36
The invisible church,	38
The holy catholic church,	38
The visible church,	40
Qualifications for church-fellowship,	42
The office of a ruling elder,	43

QUESTIONS LXV, LXVI.

THE BENEFITS ENJOYED BY THE INVISIBLE CHURCH,	44
What the benefits are which the Invisible Church enjoys,	44
What union to Christ is,	44

QUESTIONS LXVII, LXVIII.

EFFECTUAL CALLING,	48
The general nature of the Gospel call,	48
The external call of the Gospel,	48
The previous character of persons who are effectually called,	55
The change wrought in effectual calling,	57
Effectual Calling a Divine work,	61
NOTES.—Common grace,	75
Regeneration,	77

QUESTION LXIX.

COMMUNION IN GRACE WITH CHRIST,	80
--	----

QUESTIONS LXX, LXXI.

JUSTIFICATION,	81
The importance of the doctrine of justification,	81
The meaning of the word 'justify,'	82
The privileges contained in justification,	83
The foundation of justification,	86

Man's inability to work out a justifying righteousness,	86
Christ's righteousness as the ground of justification,	88
Justification an act of God's free grace,	93

QUESTIONS LXXII, LXXIII.

THE CONNECTION OF FAITH WITH JUSTIFICATION,	95
Other graces than faith do not justify,	95
How faith justifies,	98
Inferences from the doctrine of justification,	103
The nature, kinds, objects, degrees, and uses of faith,	106
The general nature of faith,	107
The various kinds of faith,	108
The objects and acts of saving faith,	110
How faith is produced,	114
The degrees of faith,	116
The use of faith in a believer's life,	117
How faith is attained or increased,	120
NOTES.—The connection of faith with justification,	121
What is faith?	124
Are there several kinds of faith?	126
Acts of faith, direct and reflex,	130

QUESTION LXXIV.

ADOPTION,	131
The various senses of the name 'Sons of God,'	131
The difference between divine and human adoption,	132
The reference of the sonship of believers to the sonship of Christ,	133
The privileges of adoption,	134
The connection between adoption and justification,	136

QUESTION LXXV.

SANCTIFICATION,	137
The meaning of the word 'sanctify,'	137
What sanctification includes,	138
Practical inferences from the doctrine of sanctification,	143

QUESTION LXXVI.

REPENTANCE,	146
The subjects of repentance,	146

	Page
Man's natural aversion to repentance,	146
Repentance wrought by the Divine Spirit,	147
The means of repentance,	147
The differences between legal and evangelical repentance,	149
The various acts of evangelical repentance,	150
Practical inferences from the doctrine of repentance,	151
NOTE.—Legal convictions of sin,	152

QUESTION LXXVII.

THE CONNECTION AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION,	152
The connection between justification and sanctification,	152
The difference between justification and sanctification,	153

QUESTION LXXVIII.

THE IMPERFECTION OF SANCTIFICATION,	154
The imperfection of believers,	154
Why believers are allowed to be imperfect,	156
How the imperfection of sanctification is displayed,	157
The consequences of the prevailing power of indwelling sin,	161
Practical inferences from the imperfect state of believers,	161

QUESTION LXXIX.

PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE,	164
General view of the doctrine of perseverance,	164
Explanation of the doctrine of perseverance,	165
Perseverance the result of the Divine power and will,	167
Proofs of the doctrine of perseverance,	168
Examination of objections against the doctrine of perseverance,	179
Practical inferences from the doctrine of perseverance,	193
NOTE.—The characters described in 2 Pet. ii. 21, 22,	194

QUESTION LXXX.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION,	194
The nature and degrees of assurance,	195
The attainableness of assurance,	196
The character of the persons who enjoy assurance,	201
The means of attaining assurance,	201

QUESTION LXXXI.

DESTITUTION OF ASSURANCE,	210
Assurance not of the essence of faith,	210
——— may not be soon obtained,	213
——— may be weakened and intermitted,	213
The state of believers who want assurance,	215

QUESTION LXXXII.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN GLORY,	217
---------------------------------	-----

QUESTION LXXXIII.

EARNESTS OF GLORY, AND APPREHENSIONS OF WRATH,	217
Earnests of glory,	218
Apprehensions of wrath,	223
Practical inferences from the different prospects of the righteous and the wicked,	224

QUESTIONS LXXXIV, LXXXV.

DEATH,	225
The certainty of death,	225
The sting and curse of death,	228
Death an advantage to believers,	228

QUESTION LXXXVI.

THE FUTURE STATE,	230
The immortality of the soul,	230
The immediate happiness of the righteous after death,	236
The misery of the wicked at death,	245
NOTES.—Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison,	245
Arguments against purgatory,	246

QUESTION LXXXVII.

THE RESURRECTION,	248
The meaning of the resurrection,	249
The resurrection not contrary to reason,	249
——— a doctrine purely of revelation,	250
Proofs of the doctrine of the resurrection,	252
Examination of objections against the resurrection,	262
The resurrection universal,	265
The condition in which the body shall be raised,	267
NOTE.—The identity of the human body,	269

QUESTION LXXXVIII.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT,	270
Proofs of the final judgment,	271
The person and appearance of the Judge,	272
The persons judged,	274
The manner of the judgment,	276
The place and time of the judgment,	279
Practical inferences from the doctrine of the final judgment,	280

QUESTION LXXXIX.

FINAL PUNISHMENT,	281
The nature of the punishment,	282
The degree of the punishment,	283
The duration of the punishment,	283
How the doctrine of final punishment is to be preached,	285

QUESTION XC.

FINAL BLESSEDNESS,	286
The saints acknowledged and acquitted,	286
——— joining Christ in judging,	287
——— blessed in heaven,	289
Practical inferences from the doctrine of final blessedness,	296

	Page		Page
QUESTIONS XCI, XCII.		General import of the fourth commandment, 341	
MORAL OBLIGATION,	298	The nature of the sabbatic institution,	342
Man bound to obey God,	298	The date of the sabbatic institution,	344
Connection of revelation with moral obligation,	299	The change of the sabbath,	346
The law of God as the rule of obligation,	299	The relative time of the sabbath,	352
QUESTIONS XCIII, XCIV, XCV, XCVI, XCVII.		QUESTIONS CXVII, CXVIII.	
THE NATURE AND USES OF THE MORAL LAW,	300	THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT, 353	
The nature of the moral law,	300	Preparatory duties to sabbath-sanctification, 353	
The uses of the moral law,	302	The sabbatic rest, 355	
Strictures on Antinomianism,	305	Works of necessity and mercy, 356	
QUESTION XCVIII.		The sanctifying of the sabbath, 358	
THE JUDICIAL AND THE CEREMONIAL LAW,	307	QUESTIONS CXIX, CXX, CXXI.	
The judicial law,	307	THE PROHIBITIONS AND MOTIVES OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT, 360	
The ceremonial law,	308	The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment, 360	
The legislation from Horeb,	311	The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, 361	
QUESTION XCIX.		Import of the word 'remember' in the fourth commandment, 362	
RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS,	312	Inferences from the fourth commandment, 363	
QUESTIONS C, CI, CII.		QUESTION CXXII.	
THE PREFACE AND SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS,	314	THE SUM OF THE SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW, 363	
QUESTIONS CIII, CIV.		Love to our neighbour, 364	
THE DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT,	316	Doing as we would be done by, 364	
QUESTIONS CV, CVI.		QUESTIONS CXXIII, CXXIV, CXXV, CXXVI.	
THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT,	318	THE RELATIONS OF LIFE, 366	
Atheism,	318	The meaning of 'father' and 'mother' in the fifth commandment, 366	
Idolatry,	321	Why superiors are styled father and mother, 366	
NOTE.—Doctrines of Devils,	327	The bases and nature of the social relations, 367	
QUESTIONS CVII, CVIII, CIX, CX.		QUESTIONS CXXVII, CXXVIII, CXXIX, CXXX, CXXXI, CXXXII.	
THE SECOND COMMANDMENT,	328	RELATIVE DUTIES, 368	
Difference between the first and the second commandment,	328	The duties of inferiors to superiors, 368	
The duties enjoined in the second commandment,	329	The sins of inferiors against superiors, 374	
The sins forbidden in the second commandment,	330	The duties of superiors to inferiors, 374	
The reasons annexed to the second commandment,	334	The sins of superiors against inferiors, 376	
QUESTIONS CXI, CXII, CXIII, CXIV.		The duties of equals, 377	
THE THIRD COMMANDMENT,	335	The sins of equals, 377	
General view of the third commandment,	335	QUESTION CXXXIII.	
The duties enjoined in the third commandment,	336	THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT, 378	
The sins forbidden in the third commandment,	337	QUESTIONS CXXXIV, CXXXV, CXXXVI.	
The reasons annexed to the third commandment,	341	THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT, 380	
QUESTIONS CXV, CXVI.		The duties enjoined in the sixth commandment, 380	
THE SABBATIC INSTITUTION,	341	The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment, 381	
		NOTE.—The Judicial Law.—The Civil Punishment of Death, 386	

	Page		Page
QUESTIONS CXXXVII, CXXXVIII, CXXXIX.		QUESTIONS CLII, CLIII.	
THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT,	392	THE DESERT OF SIN, AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE FROM IT,	430
The duties required in the seventh com- mandment,	392	The desert of sin,	430
The sins forbidden in the seventh com- mandment,	392	The way of escape from the desert of sin,	431
The aggravations of sins against the se- venth commandment,	394	QUESTION CLIV.	
The occasions of the sins against the seventh commandment,	395	THE ORDINANCES,	433
QUESTIONS CXL, CXLI.		The import of the ordinances,	433
THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT,	396	Classification of the ordinances,	434
The promotion of our own well-being,	396	The ordinance of praise,	434
The promotion of our neighbour's well- being,	397	QUESTION CLV.	
QUESTION CXLII.		THE ORDINANCE OF THE WORD,	443
THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT,	399	The Word is to be read and explained,	444
Self-robbery,	399	The Word made effectual to salvation,	444
Theft,	399	QUESTIONS CLVI, CLVII.	
Breach of trust,	400	BY WHOM AND HOW THE WORD IS TO BE READ,	448
Non-payment of debt,	400	The Word to be read by and to all men,	448
Oppression,	401	Directions for reading the Word of God,	452
Litigiousness,	402	NOTE.—Scriptures 'hard to be understood,'	472
Usury,	402	QUESTIONS CLVIII, CLIX, CLX.	
Restitution,	402	THE PREACHING AND HEARING OF THE WORD,	473
QUESTIONS CXLIII, CXLIV, CXLV.		By whom the Word is to be preached,	473
THE NINTH COMMANDMENT,	403	How the Word is to be preached,	476
The duties required in the ninth com- mandment,	403	The hearing of the Word,	480
The sins forbidden in the ninth com- mandment,	405	NOTE.—Are unconverted persons to be ex- horted to pray?	481
QUESTIONS CXLVI, CXLVII, CXLVIII.		QUESTIONS CLXI, CLXII, CLXIII, CLXIV.	
THE TENTH COMMANDMENT,	416	THE SACRAMENTS,	483
The duties required in the tenth com- mandment,	416	The nature and parts of a sacrament,	483
The sins forbidden in the tenth com- mandment,	419	How the sacraments become effectual means of salvation,	487
QUESTION CXLIX.		What the sacraments of the gospel dis- pensation are,	488
MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP THE COM- MANDMENTS,	423	NOTES.—The design of observing the Lord's Supper,	490
The nature and limits of man's inability,	423	Extreme unction,	490
The uniform and constant display of man's inability,	424	QUESTION CLXV.	
QUESTION CL.		BAPTISM,	492
THE DEGREES OF SIN,	426	The nature and authority of baptism,	492
QUESTION CLI.		The form of baptism,	493
THE AGGRAVATIONS OF SIN,	426	What baptism signifies and entails,	494
Aggravations from the person offending,	426	QUESTION CLXVI.	
parties offended,	427	THE SUBJECTS AND MODE OF BAPTISM,	496
nature and quality	428	Who are excluded from baptism,	496
of the offence,	428	The profession of faith made in baptism,	497
circumstances of	429	Infant baptism,	497
time and place,	429	The mode of baptism,	506
		Abuse of the ordinance of baptism,	511
		NOTE.—The connection of discipleship and baptism,	512
		QUESTION CLXVII.	
		THE IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM,	513
		Our obligation to improve baptism,	513
		How baptism is to be improved,	514

	Page
QUESTIONS CLXVIII, CLXIX, CLXX.	
THE LORD'S SUPPER,	517
The Lord's Supper an ordinance of the New Testament,	518
By whom the Lord's Supper is to be ad- ministered,	518
The elements used in the Lord's Supper, .	519
The setting apart of the elements in the Lord's Supper,	519
The actions performed in observing the Lord's Supper,	520
What is signified in the Lord's Supper, .	522
The qualifications of communicants, . .	524
NOTES.—Half-communion,	524
Transubstantiation,	525

QUESTION CLXXI.

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER, .	527
Self-examination,	527
Various duties of preparation for the Lord's Supper,	534

QUESTIONS CLXXII, CLXXIII.

THE PARTAKERS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, .	535
The case of doubting professors, . . .	535
— ignorant and immoral pro- fessors,	537
The use of the Lord's Supper as a civil test,	540

QUESTIONS CLXXIV, CLXXV.

DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE OBSER- VANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,	541
Duties while observing the Lord's Supper, .	541
Duties after observing the Lord's Supper, .	546
NOTE.—Covenanting and Vowing,	549

QUESTIONS CLXXVI, CLXXVII.

THE CORRESPONDENCE AND THE DIFFER- ENCE BETWEEN BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER,	550
Correspondence between baptism and the Lord's Supper,	550
Difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper,	551

QUESTION CLXXVIII.

THE KINDS AND PARTS OF PRAYER, . . .	552
What prayer supposes,	553
The various kinds of prayer,	553
The various parts of prayer,	554

QUESTIONS CLXXIX, CLXXX,
CLXXXI.

TO WHOM AND IN WHOSE NAME PRAYER IS MADE,	561
Prayer is to be made to God only, . . .	561
— in the name of Christ,	562
Why prayer is to be made in the name of Christ,	563

QUESTION CLXXXII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP IN PRAYER, . .	563
---------------------------------------	-----

	Page
Prayer cannot be made without the Spi- rit's help,	563
In what the Spirit's help in prayer con- sists,	565
Raised affections in prayer,	566
Practical inferences from the Spirit's help in prayer,	567

QUESTIONS CLXXXIII, CLXXXIV.

FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT PRAYER IS TO BE MADE,	568
For whom prayer is to be made,	568
For whom prayer is not to be made, . .	571
For what prayer is to be made,	575
NOTE.—Is any sin unpardonable?	576

QUESTION CLXXXV.

HOW PRAYER IS TO BE MADE,	580
The frame of mind in which prayer is to be made,	580
The graces which are to be exercised in prayer,	583
Requisites to the graces which are to be exercised in prayer,	587
Perseverance in prayer,	588

QUESTIONS CLXXXVI, CLXXXVII.

THE RULE OF DIRECTION FOR PRAYER, . .	590
The necessity of a rule of direction for prayer,	590
The word of God the rule of direction for prayer,	590
Practical inferences from the word of God being a rule of direction for prayer, . .	600
The Lord's Prayer a special rule of direc- tion for prayer,	600

QUESTIONS CLXXXVIII, CLXXXIX.

THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, . .	602
---------------------------------------	-----

QUESTION CX.

THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,	608
---	-----

QUESTION CXI.

THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,	617
What is supposed in the Second Petition, .	618
What is prayed for in the Second Petition, .	619

QUESTION CXII.

THE THIRD PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,	625
The meaning of doing the will of God, . .	625
What is prayed for in the Third Petition, .	626
How the will of God is to be done, . . .	627

QUESTION CXIII.

THE FOURTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,	628
The meaning of the word 'Bread' in the Fourth Petition,	628

	Page		Page
What is supposed in the Fourth Petition,	629	QUESTION CXCV.	
What is prayed for in the Fourth Petition,	629		
QUESTION CXCV.		THE SIXTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S	
THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S		PRAYER,	644
PRAYER,	633	The meaning of the word 'temptation,'	644
Man's uneasiness under a sense of guilt,	634	What is supposed in the Sixth Petition,	644
How a sinner is to ask forgiveness,	635	Temptations, and prayer for deliverance	
The connexion between forgiving others		from them,	646
and enjoying forgiveness from God,	638	QUESTION CXCVI.	
NOTE.—Prayer for Pardon,	643	THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,	663

THE

DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

THE CHURCH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

QUESTION LXI. *Are all they saved who hear the gospel, and live in the church?*

ANSWER. All that hear the gospel, and live in the visible church, are not saved, but they only who are true members of the church invisible.

QUESTION LXII. *What is the visible church?*

ANSWER. The visible church is a society made up of all such as, in all ages, and places of the world, do profess the true religion, and of their children.

QUESTION LXIII. *What are the special privileges of the visible church?*

ANSWER. The visible church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government, of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies, and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come unto him.

QUESTION LXIV. *What is the invisible church?*

ANSWER. The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head.

THEY who are made partakers of Christ's redemption, and are brought into a state of salvation, have been already described as members of Christ's body the church. We are now led to consider them as brought into this relation to him. Accordingly we are to inquire in what sense they are members of Christ's church; and to speak of this church as to its nature, constitution, subjects, and privileges.

The Meaning of the Word 'Church.'

We shall first inquire what we are to understand by the word 'church,' as we find it applied in scripture.

1. It is sometimes used to signify any assembly that is met together, whatever be the design of their meeting. Though it is very seldom taken in this sense in scripture; yet there are two or three places in which it is so understood. Thus the multitude who met together at Ephesus, who made a riot, crying out, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians,' are called 'a church;' for the word is the same which we generally so render.^a Our translators, indeed, render it, 'the assembly was confused;' and it is said, 'This matter ought to be determined in a lawful assembly,'^b that being an unlawful one; and, 'the town-clerk dismissed the assembly.'^c In all these places, the word, in the Greek,^d is the same which we, in other places, render 'church;' and the reason why our translators have rendered it 'assembly,' is that the word 'church' is used in a very uncommon sense in these places,—a sense in which we do not find it used in any other part of scripture.

^a Acts xix. 32.

^b Verse 39.

^c Verse 41.

^d εκκλησια.

2. The word 'church' is frequently used by the Fathers metonymically, for the place in which the church met together for religious worship. So also it is often understood among us, and some other reformed churches, as well as among the Papists. But it does not sufficiently appear that it is ever so understood in scripture. Some, it is true, suppose that it is taken in this sense in 1 Cor. xi. 18, where it is said, 'When ye come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you;' and, they think, it is farther explained, and proved to be taken in this sense, from what the apostle adds, 'When ye come together into one place;'^e 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?'^f They hence conclude that the apostle means nothing else but the place where they were convened together; more especially, as 'the church' is here opposed to their own 'houses.' But it may be replied that, in the first of the verses now mentioned, 'When ye come together in the church,' the word may be very easily understood of particular persons met together with the rest of the church. As to its being said 'when ye come together into one place,' the phrase refers, not to the place in which they were assembled,^g but to their meeting together with one design or accord. And when it is said, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?' the opposition is not between their own houses and the place where they were met together; but the meaning is, 'By your not eating and drinking in your own houses, but doing it in the presence of the church or the assembly of God's people that are met together, you are not only chargeable with indecency, and with interrupting them in the work which they are come about, but you make a kind of schism among them, as doing that which they cannot in conscience approve of, or join with you in; and their disapproval you are ready to call caprice or humour, and hereby you despise them.' Indeed, the place of worship cannot, properly speaking, be said to be the object of contempt. We conclude, therefore, that the apostle does not use the word, in this metonymical sense, for the place of worship, but for the worshipping assembly.

It is objected that the word 'synagogue' is often taken metonymically, in scripture, for the place where persons were assembled to worship. Thus our Saviour is said sometimes to 'teach in the synagogues of the Jews.'^h Elsewhere we read of one, concerning whom the Jews say, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.'ⁱ The psalmist also, speaking concerning the church's enemies, says, 'They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land.'^k The apostle James, likewise, adapting his mode of speaking to that which was used among the Jews, calls the church of God 'a synagogue.' 'If,' says he, 'there come unto your assembly,' or synagogue, as it is in the margin, 'a man with a gold ring,'^l &c.; where the word is taken for the place where they were assembled. The objectors hence infer that we have as much reason to understand the word 'church' for the place where the church meets together. Now, though the word 'synagogue,' in most of these scriptures, certainly denotes the place where persons meet together on a religious account; it is very much to be doubted whether it is to be so understood in the last of the scriptures referred to. Accordingly, our translators render it 'assembly;' and so the meaning is, 'When you are met together, if a poor man come into your assembly, you despise him.' But suppose the word 'synagogue' were to be taken in this, as it is in the other scriptures, for the place of worship; suppose, also, that by a parity of reason, the word 'church' may be taken in the same sense; all that can be inferred is, that they who call places of worship 'churches' speak agreeably to the sense, though it may be not agreeably to the express words of scripture. This, however, is so trifling a controversy, that it is not worth our while to say any thing more respecting it.

The learned Mede^m insists largely on it, in a discourse founded on the words of the apostle already mentioned, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or de-

e 1 Cor. xi. 20.

f Verse 22.

g The words *ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, when used elsewhere, cannot be understood of the place where persons were met, but of the unanimity of those who were engaged in the same action; and therefore it is rendered 'simul,' in Acts iii. 1. and chap. iv. 26.

h Matt. iv. 23.

i Luke vii. 5.

k Psal. lxxiv. 8.

l James ii. 2.

m See his Works, vol. i. Book ii. p. 405, et seq.

spise ye the church of God?' He there attempts to prove from the opposition that there is between their 'own houses' and 'the church of God,' that the apostle, by 'the church,' means the place of worship. But the inconclusiveness of this argument has been already considered. What he farther says, to prove that there were places, in the apostle's days, appropriated or set apart for divine worship, and, in particular, that the room in which the disciples met together on the day of our Saviour's resurrection and eight days after, in which they were honoured with his presence, was the same in which he ate his last Passover with them, and instituted the Lord's Supper, and that it was in that place that they constantly met together for worship, that there the seven deacons were afterwards chosen,ⁿ and that afterwards a goodly church was erected on the same spot of ground,—what he says to prove these points, is mere uncertain conjecture. That the disciples met together in an apartment or convenient room, in the dwelling-house of some pious one of their number, is very probable. But his observation that it was an upper room, on account of being freest from disturbance and nearest to heaven, seems to be too trifling for so great a man. As to his supposing that this room is referred to in the account of the disciples' 'breaking bread from house to house,'^o a phrase which he contends ought to be rendered 'breaking bread in the house,' that is, in this house appointed for the purpose; his rendering and the opinion founded on it, are not so agreeable to the sense of the Greek words,^p as our translation is. As to his proving that there were particular places appropriated for worship in the three first centuries, by referring to several quotations out of the Fathers who lived in those ages, what he says is not to be contested. Yet the objection which he brings against this being universally true, taken from what Origen, Minutius Felix, Arnobius, and Lactantius say concerning the Christians, in their time, declining to build them, after they had been disturbed and harassed by various persecutions, seems to have some weight, and is not sufficiently answered by him. What he says on the subject may be consulted in the work of his to which we have referred. All that we shall say is, that it is beyond dispute that as the church was obliged to convene together for religious worship, it was necessary that the usual place in which this was performed should be known by them. But it still remains uncertain whether,—though, at some times, in the more peaceable state of the church, they met constantly in one place,—they did not, at other times, adjourn from place to place, or sometimes convene in the open air, in places where they might meet with less disturbance from their enemies. All who are conversant in the history of the church in those ages, know that they often met, especially in times of persecution, in caves and other subterraneous places, near the graves of those who had suffered martyrdom; their object in doing this was not only to encourage one another to bear a similar testimony to Christianity to that which the martyrs had done, but that they might be more retired and undisturbed in their worship.

But, as most things connected with this subject are of little moment, what I would principally oppose is an opinion which the excellent writer now mentioned attempts to prove, in his following Dissertation,^q as to the reverence which is due to these churches, not only whilst divine duties are performed in them, but at other times, as supposing that they retain a relative sanctity which calls for veneration at all times. The main stress of his argument rests on the sanctity of those places which, by divine appointment, were consecrated for worship under the ceremonial law; and on the reverence which was expressed by persons when they entered them, which, by a supposed parity of reason, he applies to those places which are erected for worship under the gospel-dispensation. But it does not follow that, because the tabernacle and temple had a relative holiness in them, the same thing is applicable to places of worship under the gospel-dispensation. The temple was a type of God's presence among men, and in particular of the incarnation of Christ, which was a glorious instance of that presence. The temple was also an ordinance for their faith in this matter; and on that account it was holy. Besides, there was a visible external symbol of God's presence, whose throne was upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, in the holy of holies; so that this might well be called 'a holy place,'

ⁿ Acts vi. 1—6.

^o Acts ii. 46.

^p Κατ' οίκον.

^q See p. 432, et seq.

even when worship was not performed in it. But it is certain that other places of worship, and, in particular, the synagogues, were not then reckoned so, when no worship was performed in them, though they were erected for that purpose. Moreover, our Saviour seems to intimate, that the holiness of places is taken away under the gospel-dispensation. This appears from his reply to the woman of Samaria, when, speaking concerning their 'fathers worshipping in this mountain,' that is, in the temple which was erected on mount Gerizim, he says, 'The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father;'^r that is, no place shall be so consecrated for religious worship that it shall be more acceptable there than elsewhere, and consequently no veneration is to be paid to any such place more than another, where the same worship may be performed.^s

3. What we have been stating is little other than a digression from our present design; which is to show that the word 'church,' in scripture, is, for the most part, if not always, taken for an assembly of Christians met together for religious worship, according to the rules which Christ has given for their direction. The Hebrew word, in the Old Testament, by which the church of the Jews is signified, is generally rendered 'congregation,'^t or assembly; so that, in our translation, we never meet with the word 'church' in the Old Testament. Yet what is there called 'the congregation,' or assembly of the Israelites, might very properly be called 'a church,' inasmuch as it is so styled in the New Testament. Thus it is said concerning Moses, that 'he was in the church in the wilderness.'^u But it is certain that the word 'church,' is peculiarly adapted, in the New Testament, to signify the Christian church, worshipping God according to the rules prescribed by our Saviour, and others delivered by his apostles, under the Spirit's direction. This is the sense in which we are to understand it, in discussing these Answers. [See Note A, page 36.]

The meaning of the phrases 'the Visible' and 'the Invisible Church.'

We proceed to consider the church as distinguished into *visible* and *invisible*. Each of these is particularly defined, and will be farther insisted on under some following Heads. At present, we may offer something, by way of premisal, concerning the reason of this distinction. The word 'church,' according to its grammatical construction, signifies a number of persons who are called; and, in its application to the present subject, every one who is a member of it, may be said to be called to be made partaker of that salvation which is in Christ. Now, there is a twofold calling spoken of in scripture. The one is visible and external, whereby some are made partakers of the external privileges of the gospel and all its ordinances; the other is internal and saving, whereby others are made partakers of those special and distinguishing blessings which God bestows on the heirs of salvation. The former our Saviour intends when he says, 'Many are called, but few are chosen';^x the latter is what the apostle speaks of, when he connects it with 'justification' and

^r John iv. 20, 21. ^s It may be observed, that though the learned author formerly mentioned gives sufficient evidence from the Fathers, that there were several places appropriated, and some erected, for divine worship, during the three first centuries; and though he thinks that whether they were consecrated or not, there was a great degree of reverence paid to them, even at times when divine service was not performed in them; yet he does not produce any proof for this out of the writings of the Fathers in those centuries. It is impossible, indeed, that he should; for, from Eusebius' account of the matter, it appears that the consecration of churches was first practised in the fourth century. [Vid. ejusd. Hist. Eccl. lib. x. cap. 3.] As for the quotations which Mr. Mede brings from Chrysostom and Ambrose, to prove that reverence was paid to the churches in their time, it must be observed that they lived in the fourth century, in which churches being not only appropriated, but consecrated for public worship, it is no wonder to find the Fathers of that age expressing a reverence for them. Nevertheless, it is very evident, from the words of these Fathers there cited, that they intend nothing but a reverent behaviour, which ought to be expressed by those who come into the church to perform any act of divine worship; and this we are far from denying, whether the external rites of consecration be used or not. As for his quotation from Tertullian, who lived in the end of the second century, it does not prove that he thought reverence ought to be expressed to the places of worship, but that the highest reverence ought to be used in the acts of worship, and particularly in prayer; which is an undoubted truth, whether we worship God in the church or anywhere else.

^t עדה.

^u Acts vii. 38.

^x Matt. xx. 16.

‘glorification.’ Now, they who are called in the former of these senses, are included in that branch of the distinction which respects the visible church; the latter are members of that church which is styled invisible. The former are members of Christ by profession; the latter are united to him as their Head and Husband, are made partakers of spiritual life from him, and shall live for ever with him. The members of the visible church are the children of God, as made partakers of the external dispensation of the covenant of grace. These God speaks of, when he says, ‘I have nourished and brought up children.’^z Elsewhere also he says concerning the church of the Jews, who were externally in covenant with him, ‘Israel is my son, even my first-born.’^a But the members of the invisible church are the children of God by faith;^b and because children in this sense, ‘heirs,—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.’^c These things, however, must be particularly insisted on.

The Invisible Church.

Accordingly, we shall say something concerning the invisible church. This is described, in one of the Answers we are explaining, as containing the whole number of the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ their Head.

1. They are said to be elect, and subject to Christ their Head. On this account, some have included in the number the holy angels; inasmuch as they are styled, by the apostle, ‘elect angels;’^d and Christ is, in some respects, their Head, as the apostle calls him ‘the Head of all principality and power;’^e and elsewhere the church is said to come to ‘an innumerable company of angels.’^f But though they are indeed elected, it may be questioned whether they were chosen in Christ, as the elect among the children of men are said to be; and though Christ is styled their Head, yet his headship over them does not include those things which are implied in his being the Head of his chosen people, as he is the Head of the covenant of grace on which their salvation is founded, or ‘the Captain of their salvation,’^g who, having purchased them by his blood, brings them into a state of grace, and then to glory. For these, and similar reasons, I would not assert that angels are properly a part of Christ’s invisible church, but would infer that it includes those only who are elected to salvation among the children of men.

2. They are farther described as persons who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head. Hence, there is a part of them that are not actually brought in to him. These our Saviour speaks of, under the metaphor of sheep who were ‘not of this fold,’ concerning whom he says, ‘Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.’^h There is also another part of them who are triumphant in heaven; as well as those who are actually called by the grace of God, and are on their way to heaven, struggling, at present, with many difficulties, through the prevalence of corruption,—and conflicting with many temptations, and exposed to many evils, which attend the present state. These different circumstances of those who are brought in to Christ, give occasion to the known distinction between ‘the church triumphant’ and ‘the church militant.’

To that part of this description of the invisible church which includes those who shall be gathered unto Christ, it is objected that no one can be said to be a member of this church who is not actually brought in unto him; for to say this would be to suppose that unconverted persons might be members of it, and consequently that Christ is their Head, Shepherd, and Saviour. Yet they are characterized, in scripture, as children of wrath, running in all excess of riot, refusing to submit to him, and neglecting that great salvation which is offered in the gospel. How, then, it is asked, can such be members of Christ’s church, and that in the highest sense of the word ‘church?’ Moreover, it is objected, against the account given of the invisible church in this Answer, that a part of those who are said to be the members of it, are considered, at present, as not existing. It must, we are told, be a very

y Rom. viii. 30.
d 1 Tim. v. 21.

z Isa. i. 2.
e Col. ii. 10.

a Exod. iv. 22.
f Heb. xii. 22.

b Gal. iii. 26.
g Chap. ii. 10.

c Rom. viii. 17.
h John x. 16.

improper, if not absurd, way of speaking, to say that such are members of Christ's church.

Now, I am not inclined to extenuate those expressions of scripture which represent unconverted persons as children of wrath, in open rebellion against God, and refusing to submit to him; nor would I say any thing from which such might have the least ground to conclude that they have a right to any of the privileges of God's elect or of Christ's invisible church, or that they are included in that number. To do this would be to expose the doctrine of election to one of the main objections which are brought against it,—that it leads to licentiousness. Yet let it be considered that this Answer treats of the *invisible* church; so that whatever privileges are reserved for those who, though elected, are in an unconverted state, are altogether unknown to them, and it would be an unwarrantable presumption for them to lay claim to them. We must not deny, however, that God knows who are his, who are redeemed by Christ, and what blessings, pursuant to their being so, shall be applied to them. He knows the time when they shall be made a willing people, in the day of his power; and what graces he designs to work in them. He considers the elect in general as given to Christ, and Christ as having undertaken to do all that is necessary to fit them for the heavenly blessedness. Moreover, we must suppose that God knows, without the least doubt and uncertainty, the whole number of those who shall appear with Christ in glory, at his second coming. For things which are future to us, are present with respect to him; as, with one single view, he knows all things past and to come, as well as present. Now, if the expression made use of be thus qualified, which is agreeable to the design of this Answer, I cannot see that the objection has sufficient force to overthrow it; any more than those arguments which are usually brought against the doctrine of election, can render it less worthy to be received by us.

The other branch of the objection, is that they who are not in being cannot be denominated members of Christ's church in any sense. Now, though it be allowed that such cannot be, at present, the subjects of any privileges; yet we must consider that, since God seeth not as man seeth, they may, in his eternal purpose to save them, be considered as the objects of his grace, and therefore, in his account, be reckoned members of Christ's invisible church, that is, such as he designs to bring into being, and afterwards to make meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. I see no reason, therefore, to except against the mode of speaking in which they are described as persons who shall be gathered under Christ their Head. If, however, the objection respected only the propriety or impropriety of a word, and had not a tendency to overthrow the doctrine of God's certain and peremptory election, I would not militate against it.

3. This church, which is said to consist of the whole number of the elect, is styled invisible. By this we are not to understand that their election of God cannot be known by themselves; for we have sufficient ground, from scripture, to conclude that believers may attain the assurance of this in the present life. But the church is so called, because many of them have finished their course in this world, and have entered into that state in which they are, with respect to those who live here, no more seen. Moreover, the number of those who are styled the members of this church, cannot be determined by any creature. It is known to God only. That grace, also, which any of them experience, how far soever they may arrive at the knowledge of it themselves, cannot be said to be certainly and infallibly known by others. Hence, the apostle says concerning them, that 'their life is hid with Christ in God.'ⁱ [See Note B, p. 38.] Although, however, this church is at present invisible; yet, when the whole number of the elect shall be brought in to Christ, and, as the apostle says, 'gathered together unto him,'^k it shall no longer remain invisible. For 'when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then they shall also appear with him in glory.'^l

We may farther observe concerning the church, as thus described, that it has many glorious characters given of it. It is frequently, in the Song of Solomon, called Christ's spouse. By this name, the inspired writer seems to intend more than what could well be said concerning the Jewish church; for the descrip-

ⁱ Col. iii. 3.

^k 2 Thess. ii. 1.

^l Col. iii. 4.

tion there given of it, as being all fair, and without spot,^m is applicable rather to the state in which the saints shall be hereafter, than to that in which they are at present, so that I am inclined to think that he speaks of the invisible church, or the election of grace. The character which he gives of them is an allusion to that conjugal union which there is between Christ and believers. In reference to this union, it is said elsewhere, 'Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.'ⁿ The psalmist, also in a very elegant manner, describes the church as thus related to Christ, when he says, 'Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir;'^o and then goes on to speak of it as arrived at the highest pitch of honour and happiness, and as introduced into the king's presence 'in raiment of needle-work,' with gladness and rejoicing, being brought into his palace.^p The apostle calls it, 'the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written,'^q or, as it is in the margin, enrolled, 'in heaven.' It is considered also, when brought to perfection, and 'presented' by Christ 'to himself,' or to his own view at last, as 'a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy, and without blemish.'^r In this respect it may be called, 'the holy catholic church;' though many, without sufficient ground, understand the words of the Creed in which it is so called, in a sense very different from and inferior to this. [See Note C, p. 38.]—Again, the invisible church is but one body, and therefore not divided, like the visible church, into many particular bodies, as will be observed under a following Head. This seems to be the meaning of the expression in which it is said, 'My dove, my undefiled is but one.'^s—Further, it is not the seat of human government, as the visible church is; nor are persons said to be received into its communion. Whatever officers Christ has appointed, to secure the order and promote the edification of his churches, have nothing to do in the church considered as invisible. It is, however, eminently under Christ's special government; who is the Head as well as the Saviour of it.—Again, there are many special privileges which belong to it. These include all the graces and comforts which are applied to its members by the Holy Spirit; and so they are considered as enjoying union and communion with Christ in grace and glory, as being called, justified, sanctified, and many of them assured of their interest in Christ here, while all of them shall be glorified with him hereafter. These privileges are insisted on, in several following Answers. We therefore pass them over at present, and proceed to consider another of the Answers which we are to explain.

The Visible Church.

We have next an account of the visible church. This is described as a society made up of all those who, in all ages and places of the world, profess the true religion, and of their children. In this description of the church, we may observe that it is called visible, not only because the worship performed in it, and the laws given to those particular churches of which it consists, are visible, but because its members are so, or known to the world, and because the profession they make of the true religion, or subjection to Christ as their Head and Sovereign, is open, free, and undisguised, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of the world.

Moreover, it is called a Society. This denomination it takes from the communion which its members have with one another. But as the word is in the singular number, as denoting but one body of men, it is to be inquired whether this be a proper mode of speaking, though frequently used. It is allowed by all Protestants, that there are, and have been ever since the first preaching of the gospel by the apostles, many particular churches in the world.^u That there were

^m Cant. iv. 7, et seq.

ⁿ Isa. liv. 5.

^o Psal. xlv. 9.

^p Verses 14, 15.

^q Heb. xii. 23.

^r Eph. v. 27.

^s Cant. vi. 9.

^t The Papists, indeed, pretend that there is no church in the world but that which they style catholic and visible, of which the Bishop of Rome is the head. But we may say, in answer to this vain boast, as is said concerning the church in Sardis, (Rev. iii. 1.) 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Protestants, though they often speak of the visible church as one, yet do not deny that there are many particular churches contained in it. See the Assembly's Confession of Faith, chap. 25. sect. 4.

such in the apostolic times, appears from what we often read in the New Testament, as the apostle Paul directs his epistles to particular churches, such as those at Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, &c. Some of these were larger, others smaller; yet they are equally called churches, denoting that no regard is to be had to the number of persons of which each of them consists. Thus we read of churches in particular houses;^u and these, for the reasons above-mentioned, may each of them, without the least impropriety of expression, be styled a visible church.—But it must also be allowed, on the other hand, that the church is spoken of in the singular number, in scripture, as if it were but one. Thus it is said, ‘Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.’^x Speaking of himself, he says, ‘Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;’^y and elsewhere, ‘Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.’^z Now, it is certain that it was not one particular church that he directed his persecuting rage against, but all the churches of Christ wherever he went, especially those in Judea. These he speaks of in the plural number;^a and, by doing so, he explains what he means by his ‘persecuting the church of God;’ for it is said, ‘He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.’^b Elsewhere, too, it is said, ‘God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers.’^c By ‘the church,’ here, we are to understand all the churches; for the apostles were not pastors of any particular church, but acted as pastors in all the churches wherever they went. Though every church had its own respective pastor set over it, who was in a peculiar manner related to it, yet all these churches are called in this place ‘the church.’ We are not, therefore, to contend about the use of a word, provided it be rightly explained, whether persons speak of the church in the singular, or churches in the plural number. If we speak of the church as if it were but one, the word is to be taken collectively for all the churches of Christ in the world. This the apostle explains, when he speaks of them all as if they were ‘one body,’ under the influence of the same Spirit, ‘called in one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.’^d This is that ‘unity of the Spirit’ which they were to ‘endeavour to keep,’ and, in keeping which, they were to act agreeably to their faith. In this respect, we freely allow that all the churches of Christ are one. There is but one foundation on which they are built, one rule of faith, one way to heaven, in which they all professedly walk. Moreover, not only have the churches of Christ communion with one another in their particular societies; but there is a communion of churches, whereby they own one another as walking in the same fellowship with themselves, express a sympathy with one another in afflictive circumstances, and rejoice in one another’s edification and flourishing state. In these respects, we consider the churches as one; and so call them all the church of Christ. This is to be understood, however, with certain limitations. We are not to suppose that the church, as the seat of government, is one; or that there is one set of men who have a warrant to bear rule over the whole, that is, over all the churches of Christ; for none suppose that there is one universal pastor of the church, except the Papists. All Protestants, however they explain their sentiments about the catholic visible church, allow that the seat of government is in each particular church, of which no one has any right to give pastors to other churches, or to appoint who shall be admitted into their respective communion.

There is another thing in this description of the visible church which stands in need of being explained and defended. It is said that it consists of all such as, in all ages and places of the world, do profess the true religion. If nothing be intended hereby but that none have a right to the privilege of communion of saints, or are fit to be received into any church of Christ, but those who profess the true religion, or the faith on which the church is built, I am far from denying it; for to do so would be to suppose that the church professes one faith and some of its members another, or that it builds up what it allows others to throw down. But I am a little at a loss to account for the propriety of the expression, when the church is

u 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

a Gal. i. 22.

x Acts viii. 3.

b Ver. 23.

y Phil. iii. 6.

c 1 Cor. xii. 28.

z Gal. i. 13.

d Eph. iv. 4—6.

said to be a society professing the true religion *in all ages*. It cannot be supposed that the church or churches which are now in being are any part of that society which professed the true religion in Moses' time, or in the apostolic age. It is, however, principally the propriety of expression which is to be excepted against; for I suppose nothing is intended by it but that, as the church in every respective foregoing age consisted of those who embraced the true religion, so it consists of no other in our age.

There is one thing more which I would take leave to observe in this description of the church. What I refer to is a defect in the description, which renders it incomplete. It speaks of the church as consisting of those who profess the true religion; but makes no mention of that bond of union which constitutes every particular branch of the universal church, a church of Christ. It speaks, indeed, of those qualifications which belong to every one as a Christian, which is a remote, though necessary condition, of being received into church-communion; but it takes no notice of that mutual consent which is the more immediate bond by which the members of every church coalesce together. But this we may have occasion to consider under a following Head.

The last thing I observe in this description of the visible church is, that it consists not only of the professors of the true religion, but of their children. This is rather to be explained than denied. Yet I cannot but observe that many have run too great lengths in what they have asserted concerning the right of children to this privilege. Some of the Fathers not only considered them as members of the church, but brought them to the Lord's table, and gave them the bread dipped in the wine, in the same way as food is applied to infants when they are too young to discover anything of its design. That which led them into this mistake was their misunderstanding the sense of our Saviour's words, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.'^e They supposed that these words were meant of eating bread and drinking wine in the Lord's Supper; though they might easily have known that this was not our Saviour's meaning, inasmuch as the Lord's Supper was not instituted till some time after, and, when instituted, was not designed to be reckoned so necessary to salvation that the mere not partaking of it should exclude from it. Cyprian gives an account of his administering it to an infant brought by her mother, and relates a circumstance attending the ministration which savours so much of superstition in that grave and pious Father, that I forbear to mention it.^f The giving of the Lord's Supper to children, was practised not only by him, but by several others in some following ages. Many, also, in later ages, speak of children as incomplete members of the church. Some suppose that their being so is the result of their baptismal dedication. Others suppose that it is their birthright; and they have, in consequence, maintained that when the children come to be adult, they rather claim their right to church-communion than are admitted to it, as those who are not the children of church-members. As a farther consequence of their opinion, they assert that, if they are guilty of vile enormities, and thereby forfeit their privilege, they are in a formal way to be excommunicated; and that it is a defect in the government of the churches in our day that this is not practised. The opinion of these parties, however, is not what is meant, in the Answer under consideration, by children being members of churches, together with their parents. What is meant will, I think, be allowed by all: it is, that children being the property of parents, the latter are obliged to dedicate them, together with themselves, to God, and, pursuant to their doing so, to endeavour to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, hoping that, through his blessing on education, they may, in his own time and way, be qualified for church-communion, and then admitted to it, that hereby the churches of Christ may have an addition of members to fill up the places of those who are called off the stage. As to the concern of the church in this matter, which in some respect redounds to the advantage of the children of those who are members of it, they are obliged to show their regard to them, so far as to exhort their parents, if there be occasion, to express a due concern for their spiritual welfare; or, if the children are defective in religion, to extend their censure rather to the parents than to

^e John vi. 53.

^f Vid. Cyp. de Laps. cap. 1; § 13.

them, as neglecting a moral duty, and so acting unbecoming the relation they stand in to them.

Having thus spoken concerning the description given of the visible church in this Answer, we shall now proceed to discuss it more particularly, and accordingly shall consider its former and present constitution and government. [See Note D, page 40.]

The Church under the Mosaic Dispensation.

As to the Jewish church before the gospel-dispensation, it was erected in the wilderness, and the laws by which it was governed were given by God, and transmitted to Israel by the hand of Moses. We read of a very remarkable occurrence preceding their being settled as a church. God demanded an explicit consent from the whole congregation to be his people, and to be governed by those laws he should give them. They then made a public declaration, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do;' and 'Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.' Soon after, there was another covenant-transaction between God and them, mentioned in a following chapter: 'Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.' This was confirmed by sacrifice. 'He took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, and he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people.' They here repeated their engagement, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient:' and then 'he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words.'^g Immediately after, we have an account of an extraordinary display which they had of the divine glory: 'They saw God, and did eat and drink,'^h which was a farther confirming of the covenant. On some important occasions they renewed this covenant with God. They 'avouched him to be their God;' and he condescended, at the same time, to 'avouch them to be his peculiar people.'ⁱ Thus they were settled in a church-relation by God's appointment, and by their solemn covenant and consent to be his people.

After this, we read of God's settling the form of their church-government, appointing the various ordinances and institutions which are contained in the ceremonial law, settling a ministry among them, and giving directions concerning every branch of the work which was to be performed. Aaron and his sons had the priesthood committed to them; and they were to offer gifts and sacrifices. The high priest was to be chief minister in holy things; the other priests assistants to him in most branches of his office. And when the temple was built, and the service to be performed in it established, the priests attended in their respective courses, each course entering on their ministry every sabbath;^k and there being twenty-four courses,^l it came to their respective turns twice every year. The porters, also, who were to wait continually at the avenues of the temple day and night, to prevent any unclean person or thing from coming into it, as well as its being plundered of the treasures which were laid up in chambers adjoining to it,—they also, the number of whom was the same as that of the priests,^m ministered in their courses. The singers, too, who attended some parts of the worship, ministered in their courses.ⁿ Besides these, there were some appointed to represent the people, who were chosen to come up from their respective places of abode with the priests when they ministered in their courses. These are called stationary men. Dr. Lightfoot^o gives an account of them from some Jewish writers who treat on the subject. Not that we have any mention of them in scripture; but it is supposed that the appointment of them took its rise from the law^p which obliged those who brought an offering to the Lord to be present, and to 'put their hands upon the head' of it, as well as

^g Exod. xxiv. 3, 5—9.

^l 1 Chron. xxiv.

comp. with chap. xxv.

^h Verse 11.

^m 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. comp. with chap. xxvi.

^o See his works, vol. i. pages 924, 925.

ⁱ Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

^k 2 Chron. xxiii. 4.

ⁿ 1 Chron. xxiii. 5.

^p Lev. i. 3, 4.

the priests who had the main concern in the service. From this law it is inferred that, as, besides the sacrifices which were offered for particular persons, there were daily sacrifices offered in behalf of the whole congregation, and as it was impossible for them to be present to bear a part in this service, it was necessary that some should be deputed to represent the whole body of the people, that so there might be a number present to assist in this service, and that these acts of worship might be performed in the most public manner. Inasmuch, too, as this was to be performed daily, it was necessary that some should be deputed whose proper business it was to attend. Dr. Lightfoot thinks also, that, as there were priests deputed to minister in their courses, so there was a number of persons deputed to represent the people, who went up to Jerusalem with the priests of the respective course. He adds, that at the same time that these were ministering in the temple, the people met together, and spent the week in those synagogues which were near the place of their abode, in fasting and other acts of religious worship; in which, though at a distance, they implored a blessing on the service which their brethren were performing. As to the rest of the people, they were obliged to be present at Jerusalem at the solemn and public festivals performed three times a-year. Such of them as had committed any sin which was to be expiated by sacrifice, were to go up thither to the temple at other times, and bring their sacrifices to atone for the guilt which they had contracted.

It may be said that though this was, indeed, a solemn method of worship, exceedingly beautiful, and having a feature which was its glory, namely, that the temple-service was typical of Christ and of the way of salvation by him; yet it seems to have included no means for instructing the people in the doctrines of religion, as there would be but a small attainment of this end in coming up to Jerusalem to worship at the three yearly festivals. How, it is asked, did they spend their sabbaths? Or, what acts of worship were they engaged in, in their respective places of abode? We answer, that God appointed a sufficient number to be their ministers in holy things, helpers of their faith as to this matter; he appointed not only the priests, but the whole tribe of Levi, whose place of residence was conveniently situated. They had forty-eight cities in various parts of the land; some of which were not far distant from any of the people. These instructed them in the way of God. The people sought knowledge from their mouths.^q Besides, in addition to the temple, there were several other places appointed for religious worship. These were of two sorts, synagogues, and places of prayer.

The synagogues were generally built in cities, of which hardly any were without them, if they consisted of a number of persons who were able to erect them, and had leisure from their secular employments to preside over, and set forward the work to be performed in them.^r This work was of a different nature from the temple-service, in which gifts and sacrifices were to be offered, God having expressly forbidden the erecting of any altars elsewhere than in the temple. The worship performed in the synagogues was prayer, reading, and expounding the law and the prophets, and instructing the people in all other duties of religion which were necessary to be performed in the conduct of their lives. The manner of doing this, was not only by delivering set discourses, agreeably to our common method of preaching,^s but by holding disputations and conferences about some important matters of religion. Thus the apostle Paul 'disputed in the synagogues.'^t Disputations were held occasionally; but the Jews met constantly in the synagogues for religious worship; and our Saviour encouraged them in doing so by his presence and instructions. Thus it is said, not only that 'he taught in their synagogues,' but that this was his constant practice; for it is said, 'He came to Nazareth, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.'^u There were also certain officers appointed over every synagogue. Thus

^q Mal. ii. 7.

^r These were called *בטלנים* Otiosi. See Lightfoot's Works, vol. i. p. 610—613. and Vitring. de Synag. Vet. p. 530, et seq. Lightfoot says, from one of the Talmuds, that there were no less than 460 synagogues in Jerusalem, vol. i. p. 363, 370, and that the land was full of them; in which the people met every sabbath, and some other days of the week.

^s Acts xiii. 15, et seq.

^t Chap. xvii. 17.

^u Luke iv. 15, 16.

we read sometimes of 'the rulers of the synagogues,'^x whose business was to prevent the doing of any thing which was indecent and disorderly. And there were some persons from whom a word of exhortation was expected, who were called ministers^y of the synagogue.^z Nor are we to suppose that this method of promoting religion in the synagogues, was practised only in the last and most degenerate age of the Jewish church; for they had their synagogues in the more early and purer ages. If we had no express account of this in the Old Testament, yet it might be inferred from the notices of the synagogues in our Saviour's time; for certainly there were then no methods used by the Jews to instruct the people in matters of religion, which were not as necessary, and consequently in use, in preceding ages. It is true, we do not often read of synagogues in the Old Testament. Yet there is mention of them in the scripture formerly referred to,^a in which the psalmist complains, that 'they had burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land;' where the word, being in the plural number, cannot be meant, as the Chaldee Paraphrast renders it, of the temple. This appears from the context, in which the psalmist speaks of 'the enemies of God roaring in the midst of the congregations.' Besides, he expressly mentions their burning the temple, by 'casting fire into the sanctuary of God, and casting down the dwelling-place of his name to the ground.'^b

Besides the synagogues, there were other places in which public worship was performed, called places of prayer.^c Mr. Mede gives an account, from Epiphanius, of the difference that there was between these and the synagogues. He says, that a 'proseucha,' or a place appointed for prayer, was a plot of ground encompassed with a wall or some other-like mound or enclosure, open above, much like our courts; whereas a synagogue was a covered edifice, as our houses and churches are. He adds, that the former were generally fixed in places without the cities, in the fields, in places of retirement; and that they were generally rendered more private, and fit for the work which was to be performed in them, by being surrounded with a plantation of trees. He supposes that these were not only made use of in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, but in preceding ages; and that the grove, which Abraham is said to have planted, in which he called on the name of the Lord,^d was nothing else but one of these convenient places, planted for that purpose, in which public worship was performed. This seems very probable.^e Moreover, we read, in scripture, concerning 'high places.'^f These, as Lightfoot observes,^g are sometimes spoken of in scripture in a commendable sense. Thus Samuel is said to have gone up into one of these 'high places,'^h to perform some acts of religious worship. We read also of another 'high place,' in which there was 'a company of prophets, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they did prophesy.'ⁱ It is true, in other scriptures, we read of them as abused by that idolatry which was performed in them.^j These the pious kings of Judah, who reformed religion, took away. And as to its being said in the history of some of their reigns, that how much soever they destroyed idolatrous worship, yet 'the high places were not taken away';^k Lightfoot thinks that they should not have been destroyed as places of worship or public assemblies; that it is not reckoned a blemish in the reign of those kings, that the high places were not taken away; and that, whatever abuse there was, consisted in sacrifice and incense being offered there, which were parts of worship confined to the temple. So that if the kings had not only reformed them from the abuse of those who exercised their idolatry in them, but had proceeded to reform this abuse of their sacrificing there, they might lawfully have met there to perform religious worship; which it is supposed, they did in synagogues, high places, and groves, which were appointed for that purpose. Thus, then, they met together for religious worship in other places besides the synagogues. —Again, we read in the New Testament, that Paul went, on the sabbath-day, out of the city of Philippi, 'by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made';^l and there he preached the word by which Lydia was converted. This some think to

x Mark v. 22. Luke viii. 41, 49. y Luke iv. 20. z See more of this in the pages of Lightfoot, before referred to. a Psal. lxxiv. 8. b Psal. lxxiv. 3, 7. c Προσευχαι, Proseuchæ. Ευκτηρια, προσευκτηρια, Oratoria. d Gen. xxi. 33. e See Mede's Works, vol. i. book i. disc. 8. f See vol. i. p. 608. g 1 Sam. ix. 19. h Chap. x. 5. i 1 Kings xi. 7; xii. 31. k 2 Kings xii. 3; xiv. 4; xv. 4. l Acts xvi. 13.

have been one of those places to which the Jews resorted for prayer and other public worship. Others suppose also that the place mentioned in the gospel, to which our Saviour resorted, was one of these ; and that the words, ‘ he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,’^m ought to be rendered, ‘ in that particular place where prayer was wont to be made to God.’ⁿ But the Greek words may as well be rendered as they are in our translation ; and then they have reference to no particular place of prayer, but import his retirement to perform this duty.

We have thus endeavoured to prove, that the church of the Jews had other places in which worship was performed, besides the temple,—a circumstance which was of very great advantage for propagating religion among them. We might have farther proceeded to consider their church-censures, ordained by God for crimes committed, whereby, when the crimes they were guilty of did not deserve death, persons were cut off from among their people by excommunication. But I shall not enlarge any farther upon this Head, but proceed to speak concerning the gospel-church.

The Church under the Ministry of the Apostles.

Here we shall consider the methods taken, in order to the first planting and increase of the church, by the apostles. When our Saviour had finished the work of redemption, he, after his resurrection, altered the form of the church, and appointed his apostles not only to signify to the world that he had done so, but to be instruments in erecting the new church. We have already considered the apostles as qualified to be witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, and also as having received a commission from him to preach the gospel to all nations, and an order to tarry at Jerusalem till they received those extraordinary gifts from the Holy Ghost which were necessary for their performing the work they were to engage in. Agreeably to the instructions given them, they all now resided at Jerusalem ; and, a few days after Christ’s ascension into heaven, the Holy Ghost was poured upon them on the day of Pentecost.^o They then immediately began to exercise their public ministry in that city ; and they had there the advantage of publishing the gospel to a numerous concourse of people, who had resorted thither from the various parts of the world in which the Jews were dispersed, to celebrate the festival. Some suppose that there was a greater number gathered together than was usual, it being one of those three feasts to which the Jews resorted from all the parts of the land. A learned writer^p supposes, indeed, that the Jews were not obliged to go to this feast from other nations ; and that those who did go were not said, as these are, to dwell at Jerusalem. He thinks, therefore, that what brought them thither from the several parts of the world, was the expectation which the Jews generally had that the Messiah would appear, and erect a temporal kingdom, and that Jerusalem was the place where he would fix his throne ; so that they would be there to wait on him, and share the honours they expected from him. But, whatever occasion brought them thither, it was a seasonable opportunity for the gospel first to be preached. Accordingly, Peter preached his first sermon to a multitude who were gathered together ; and therein he exercised the gift of tongues, by which means, not only was his discourse understood by men of different languages, but they had a plain proof that he was under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He takes occasion also to improve this amazing dispensation of providence, by telling them that it was an accomplishment of what had been predicted by the prophet Joel ; and then he preached Christ to them, declaring that he and the rest of the apostles, were all witnesses that God raised him from the dead, and exalted him by his right hand, and that, in consequence of this, the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon them. The success of his first sermon was very remarkable ; for there were added to the church, as the first-fruits of his ministry, ‘ three thousand souls.’^q We read also that ‘ the Lord added to the church daily such as should

^m Luke vi. 12.

ⁿ *Εν τη προσευχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, in *proseuchâ Dei*.

^o Acts ii. i, 2.

^p See Lightfoot on Acts ii. 5. vol. i. pages 751, 752.

^q Acts ii. 41, 47.

be saved.' Soon after it is said that 'the number of the men,' of whom the church consisted, 'was about five thousand.'^r This was a very large and numerous church; and, as is more than probable, it met in the same city. For we must conclude that they fixed their abode there, rather than that they returned to the respective places whence they came, that they might have an opportunity to sit under the sound of the gospel, which was at that time preached nowhere else. What makes this more probable is the method they adopted for their subsistence in the world. There would have been no occasion for those who had possessions to sell them, and dispose of the price to supply the exigencies of their fellow-members, had they not removed from their habitations, and forsaken all for the sake of the gospel.

This church had wonderful instances of the presence of God among them, which did more than compensate for the loss they must be supposed to have sustained as to their secular affairs. We read, for some time, of little else but success attending the gospel, and of persecutions raised by the Jews against it which rather tended to their own shame and confusion than to the extirpating of it. When the Jews, at length, so far prevailed that, after the death of Stephen, the first martyr, a new persecution was begun by the instigation of Saul, as yet not converted to the faith, the immediate consequence was the scattering of the church 'throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria,'^s but the eventual result was the furtherance of the gospel; for, wherever the brethren went, they preached, and many believed. The apostles, at the same time, obeying the order which was previously given them, continued at Jerusalem;^t and there still remained a church in that city sitting under their ministry. This was wisely ordered by the providence of God, not only as an accomplishment of those predictions which respected the gospel being first sounded thence, but that, in this church, a sufficient number might be trained up for the exercise of the ministry in other places, when there should be occasion for their services; and, in order to this, they had some advantages which no schools of learning could afford them, for they had the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Here it was that the prophets and evangelists were first raised up, being immediately taught by God. This was the first scene of the gospel-church. Here it continued till the apostles were ordered, by the Holy Ghost, to travel into those parts of the world in which, by his direction, their ministry was to be exercised. The greatest part of them were ordered to those places in which some of the Jews resided. But Paul was ordained to exercise his ministry among the Gentiles. Accordingly, we read that 'the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.'^u This divine command they immediately obeyed; and then we read of churches erected in various parts of the world by his ministry who is styled 'the apostle of the Gentiles.'

There are several things observable in the exercise of Paul's ministry. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel, and confirmed it by miracles, as occasion served. This was attended with such wonderful success and expedition, that the multitudes which were converted by his ministry exceeded not only what might be gathered by one man in the compass of his life, but by several ages of men, unless their ministry should be accompanied by a remarkable hand of providence. At one time, we read of him exercising his ministry 'from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum';^x at other times, in several parts of Asia Minor; then in Spain, and at Rome, and in some parts of Greece;^y and wherever he went, his ministry was attended with such wonderful success as might be described in the words of the Roman emperor, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' When the apostle had, by the success of his ministry, prepared in any place fit materials for a church, as it would have taken up too much of his time to reside among them till they were provided with a pastor and other officers, who were necessary to carry on the work which was begun, he sent for one of the evangelists, who, as was formerly observed, were fitted for this service by those extraordinary gifts which they had received, while they continued in the church at Jerusalem. The office of these evangelists seems

r Acts iv. 4.

s Chap. viii. 1.

t Chap. i. 4.
y Ver. 28.

u Chap. xiii. 2.

x Rom. xv. 19.

to have been principally this; they were to 'set in order the things that were wanting,' or left by the apostles to be done, and to 'ordain elders in every city:' as the apostle Paul intimates in his charge to Titus,^z who appears to have been an evangelist particularly ordained to minister to him, and to build upon the foundation he had laid. The evangelists appear to have had all the qualifications for the ministry which the apostles had, excepting what respected the latter having seen Jesus, and having been thereby qualified to be witnesses of his resurrection; and they continued till they had performed their work, in settling pastors and other officers in churches; and then they were ready to obey another call, to succeed the apostles in some other places, and so perform the same work there.

While the apostles were thus concerned for the gathering and building up of churches, and were assisted in this work by the evangelists, there was a continual intercourse between them and those churches whose rise was owing to the success of their ministry. Accordingly, they conversed with them by epistles; some of which they received by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as designed to be a rule of the church's faith in all succeeding ages. Some of these epistles were written by other apostles, but most of them by Paul.^a He sometimes desires to 'know the state' of the churches to whom he wrote; at other times, he informs them of his own, the opposition he met with, the success of his ministry, the persecutions he was exposed to for it,^b and the necessity of the churches which required contribution for their support; and in doing this, he often enlarges on those important truths, which, had he been among those to whom he wrote, would have been the subject of his ministry. This was necessary to strengthen their hands, and encourage them to persevere in that faith which they made profession of. We may add, that there were, upon several occasions, messengers sent from the churches to the apostle, to inform him of their state, to transmit to him those contributions which were necessary for the relief of other churches, and to give him the countenance, encouragement, and assistance, which his necessities required. Some of these were very excellent persons, the best that could be chosen out of the church for the service. The apostle calls some of them, 'the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ,'^c which is an extraordinary character. Some think, that he means, by the expression, that they were the messengers of churches which were the glory of Christ, that is, the seat in which he displays his glory. Others suppose, that he calls the messengers, 'the glory of Christ,' as they, by their wise and faithful conduct, promoted his glory; which was not dependent on, but illustrated thereby. Sometimes they were ministers of churches, sent occasionally on these errands. Thus Epaphroditus was a messenger and minister of the church at Philippi;^d and Onesiphorus was sent to strengthen and encourage the hands of the apostle, when he was a prisoner at Rome, whom Paul speaks of with great affection, when he says, 'He sought me out very diligently, and found me, and was not ashamed of my chain.'^e These were very useful persons to promote the interest of Christ, which was carried on by the apostles; though it does not appear that theirs was a standing office in the church, their service being only occasional.

The Nature and Government of the Christian Church.

Having thus considered the apostle as engaged in gathering and building up churches, in the way which was peculiar to them in the first age of the gospel, we shall now proceed to speak concerning that state and government of the church, which was designed to continue longer than the apostolic age, and is a rule to the churches of Christ in our day. We have already considered the evangelists as succeeding the apostles, in appointing officers over churches, directing them to fit persons who might be called to the ministry, and instructing these how they should behave themselves in that relation. This was necessary, in consequence of these officers not having ground to expect such extraordinary assistances from the Spirit of God as the apostles and the evangelists had received, any more than pastors and

^z Tit. i. 5.

^c 2 Cor. viii. 23.

^a Phil. ii. 19.

^d Phil. ii. 25.

^b Col. iv. 7; 2 Cor. i. 8; 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

^e 2 Tim. i. 16, 17.

other church-officers are to expect them in our day. This leads us to consider the nature, constitution, and government of the churches of Christ in all ages.

I. We shall first consider what we are to understand by a particular church, and what is the foundation of it. A church is a number of visible professors, called to be saints, or, at least, denominated, and, by a judgment of charity, esteemed saints; united together by consent, in order to their having communion with one another; and testifying their subjection to Christ, and hope of his presence in all his ordinances; designing hereby to glorify his name, propagate his gospel and interest in the world, and promote their mutual edification in that holy faith which is founded on scripture revelation. For these purposes they are obliged to call and set over them such pastors and other officers as God has qualified for the service, to be helpers of their faith, and to endeavour to promote their order, whereby the great and valuable ends of church communion may be answered, and God therein be glorified. This description of a particular church is agreeable to scripture, and founded on it, as may be easily made appear by referring to several scriptures in the New Testament relating to this matter. We read that the members of Christ are characterized as saints by calling, or 'called to be saints.'^f The churches in Macedonia are said to 'give their own selves to the Lord, and to the apostles by the will of God,'^g—to sit under their ministry, and follow their directions, so far as they imparted to them the mind of Christ, and were helpers of their faith and order, to his glory; and we read of their 'professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.'^h The church at Ephesus also is described as 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' namely, the doctrines laid down by them, as the only rule of faith and obedience, 'Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' As to their duty towards one another, they are farther said 'to build up themselves in their most holy faith, and to keep themselves in the love of God;' that is, to do every thing, by the divine assistance, which is necessary for these ends, 'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;'ⁱ or, as it is said elsewhere, to 'consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together,'^k inasmuch as this is an instituted means for answering that great end. Many other scriptures might have been brought to the same purpose, tending to prove and illustrate the description we have given of a gospel-church.

But this may be evinced, also, in a reasoning from the laws of society, as founded on the law of nature, and applied to a religious society, which takes its rise from divine revelation and is founded on it. In order to our doing this, we shall lay down the following propositions. First, it is agreeable to the law of nature, and the whole tenor of scripture, that God should be glorified by social worship, and that all the members of worshipping societies should endeavour to promote the spiritual interest of one another. Man is, by the excellency of his nature, fitted for conversation; and he is obliged to it, by his relation to others who have the same capacities and qualifications. As, moreover, the glory of God is the end of his being, it ought to be the end of all those intercourses which we have with one another; and, as divine worship is the highest instance of our glorifying God, we are, as intelligent creatures, obliged to worship him in a social way.—Again, it is the great design of Christianity to direct us how this social worship should be performed by us as Christians, paying a due regard to the gospel, and the glory of the divine perfections as displayed in it. These are the subject of divine revelation, especially of that part of it whence the laws of Christian society are taken.—Further, they who have been made partakers of the grace of God, are obliged, out of gratitude to him, as the author of it, to proclaim his glory to the world. And as the experience of that grace, and the obligations which it lays persons under, are extended to others as well as ourselves, so all who are under like engagements, ought to be helpers of the faith and joy of one another, and to promote their mutual edification and salvation. Now, that this may be done, it is necessary that they consent or agree to have communion with one another in those duties in which they express

f Rom. i. 7.

g 2 Cor. viii. 5.

h Chap. ix. 13.

i Jude, ver. 20, 21.

k Heb. x. 24, 25.

their subjection to Christ, and desire to wait on him together in all his holy institutions. And the rule for their direction in this is contained in scripture ; which sets forth the Mediator's glory, as King of saints, gives a perfect directory for gospel-worship, and encouragement to hope for his presence in it whereby it may be attended with its desired success. Finally, as Christ, in scripture, has described some persons as qualified to assist and direct us in this matter, as well as called them to this service, it is necessary that these religious societies should choose and appoint persons to preside over them, who are styled pastors after his own heart, who may feed them with knowledge and understanding, so that his ordinances may be rightly administered, and the ends of church communion answered, to his glory, and their mutual advantage.

In this method of reasoning, the constitution of churches appears to be agreeable to the law of nature. We are not to suppose, however, with the Erastians and others, that the church is wholly founded on the laws of civil society, as if Christ had left no certain rules by which it is to be governed, besides those which are common to all societies, as an expedient to maintain peace and order. For there are other ends to be answered by church communion, which are more immediately conducive to the glory of Christ, and the promoting of revealed religion, which the law of nature, and the laws of society founded on it, can give us no direction in. It is a great dishonour to Christ, the King and Head of his church, to suppose that he has left them without a rule to direct them in what respects the communion of saints ; as much as it would be to assert that he has left them without a rule of faith. If God was so particular in giving directions concerning every part of that worship which was to be performed in the church before Christ's coming, so that they were not, on pain of his highest displeasure, to deviate from it ; certainly we must not think that our Saviour has neglected to give laws, by which the gospel-church is to be governed, distinct from such as are contained in the law of nature.

It may hence be inferred, that no church, or religious society of Christians, has power to make laws for its own government, in those things that pertain to religious worship, or are to be deemed a part of it. I do not say that a church has no power to appoint some discretionary rules to be observed by those who are of the same communion, provided they are kept within due bounds, and Christ's kingly office be not invaded. There is a very great controversy in the world, about the church's power to decree some things which are styled indifferent ; but persons are not generally agreed in determining what they mean by indifferent things. Some understand by them those rites and ceremonies which are used in religious matters. These they call indifferent, because they are of less importance ; but by being made terms of communion, they cease to be indifferent. Besides, whether they are of greater or less importance, if they respect a necessary mode of worship, conducive to the glory of God, such as occasions him to be more honoured than he would be by the neglect of it, to call them indifferent is to carry the idea of indifference too far, and to extend the power of the church beyond its due bounds. For as the terms of communion are to be fixed only by Christ, and as the means by which he is to be glorified, which have the nature of ordinances in which we hope for his presence and blessing, must be sought for from him ; so the church has not power to ordain or sanction them without his warrant. Hence, when we speak of those indifferent matters which the church has power to appoint, we mean those things which are no part of religious worship, but merely discretionary, which may be observed or not, without any guilt contracted, or censure ensuing.

II. We are now led to consider the matter of a church, or the character of those persons who are qualified for church communion. We have already considered the church as a religious society. It is, therefore, necessary that all the members of it embrace the true religion ; and, in particular, that they deny none of those fundamental articles of faith which are necessary to salvation. It is not to be supposed that the members of any society have a perfect unanimity in their sentiments about all religious matters ; for that is hardly to be expected in this world. They are all obliged, however, as the apostle says, 'to hold the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourish ^{ment} ministered, and knit together, increaseth

with the increase of God,¹ and publicly to avow or maintain no doctrine which is subversive of the foundation on which the church is built. Revealed religion centres in Christ, and is referred to his glory as Mediator. Hence, all the members of a church ought to profess their faith in him and willingness to own him as their Lord and Lawgiver, and to give him the glory which is due to him as a divine Person, and as one who is appointed to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. The apostle gives a short but very comprehensive description of those who are fit members of a church, when he says, 'We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'^m It follows, that every religious society is not a church. False religions have been propagated among the heathen and others, in distinct societies of those who performed religious worship, who yet had no relation to Christ, and therefore were not reckoned among his churches. On the other hand, we cannot determine concerning every member of a particular church, that his heart is right with God. That is a prerogative which belongs only to the Searcher of hearts. It is the external profession which is our rule of judging. All are not in a state of salvation who are church-members, as the apostle says, 'They are not all Israel which are of Israel.'ⁿ He makes a distinction between a real subjection to Christ by faith, and a professed subjection to him. He says, concerning the church of the Jews, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.'^o Yet they were all church-members, professedly or apparently devoted to God. Concerning such we are bound, by a judgment of charity, to conclude, that they are what they profess themselves to be, till their conduct plainly gives the lie to their profession. The visible church is compared to the net, which had good and bad fish in it;^p and to 'the great house' in which are 'vessels' of various kinds,—'some to honour, and some to dishonour,'^q—some fit for the master's use, others to be broken as 'vessels wherein is no pleasure,'^r—some sincere, others hypocrites. Yet till their hypocrisy is made manifest, they are supposed to be fit matter for a church. [See Note E, p. 42.]

III. We are now to consider the form or bond of union, whereby the members are incorporated into a society, and so denominated a church of Christ. It is neither profession of faith, nor conduct agreeable to it, which constitutes a person a member of a particular church; for, according to the laws of society, there must be a mutual consent to walk together, or to have communion one with another in all the ordinances which Christ has established. As the materials of which a building consists, do not constitute the building unless they are cemented and joined together; so the union of professing Christians, whereby they are joined together and become one body by mutual consent, is necessary to constitute them a church, as much as their professed subjection to Christ to denominate them a church of Christ. Hereby they become a confederate body; and as every one, in a private capacity, was before engaged to perform those duties which are incumbent on all men as Christians, now they bring themselves, pursuant to Christ's appointment, under an obligation to endeavour, by the assistance of divine grace, to walk becoming the relation they stand in to each other, or, as the apostle expresses himself, 'to build up themselves in their most holy faith,'^s so that the ends of Christian society may be answered, and the glory of Christ secured; and they have ground to expect his presence in waiting on him in all his holy institutions. By means of this union they who were before considered as fit subjects for church-fellowship are said to be united together as a church of Christ. But as this principally respects the foundation or erection of churches, there are other things necessary for their increase, for the maintaining of that purity which is their glory, and for thereby preventing their contracting the guilt which would otherwise ensue.

IV. We are thus led to consider the power which Christ has given them, and the rules which he has laid down to be observed by them, in the admission of persons to church communion, and in the exclusion of them from it.

1 Col. ii. 19.

p Matt. xiii. 47.

m Phil. iii. 3.

q 2 Tim. ii. 20.

n Rom. ix. 6.

r Jer. xxii. 28.

o Chap. ii. 28, 29.

s Jude 20.

1. As to the admission of members who may fill up the places of those whose relation to them is dissolved by death, it is highly reasonable that the churches should have all the satisfaction which is necessary concerning their fitness for church communion. But we must inquire what terms or conditions are to be insisted on, and complied with, in order to admission. We must not suppose that these are arbitrary, or such as a church shall please to impose ; for it is no more in their power to make terms of communion, than it is to make a rule of faith or worship. In this, a church differs from a civil society. The terms of admission into the latter are arbitrary, provided they do not interfere with any of the laws of God or man. But the terms of Christian communion are fixed by Christ, the Head of his church ; and therefore no society of men have a right to make the door of admission into their own communion straiter or wider than Christ has made it. This is a matter in which some of the reformed churches differ among themselves ; though the dissension ought not to rise so high as to cause any alienation of affection, or any degree of uncharitableness, so as to occasion any to think that because they do not in all things agree as to this matter, they ought not to treat one another as those who hold the Head, and are designing to advance the interest of Christ in the various methods they are pursuing to advance it. I think it is allowed by most of the churches of Christ—at least by those who suppose that persons have no right to church communion, without the consent of that particular society of which any one is to be made a member—that nothing short of a professed subjection to Christ, and a desire to adhere to him in all his offices, as well as worship him in all his ordinances, can be reckoned a term of church communion. For we suppose the church to be built upon this foundation ; and nothing short of it can sufficiently set forth the glory of Christ as its Head, or answer the valuable ends of church communion. It follows that, as ignorance of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ disqualifies for church communion, so also does immorality in conduct ; for both of these evince a person to be alienated from the life of God, a stranger to the covenant of promise, and in subjection to Satan, the god of this world, which is inconsistent with a professed subjection to Christ. Hence, a mind rightly informed in the great doctrines of the gospel, with a conduct in life corresponding to it, is to be insisted on, as a term of church communion.

But that in which the sentiments of men differ, is the way and manner in which this qualification for church communion is to be rendered visible ; and whether some things which are merely circumstantial are to be insisted on as terms of communion. That those qualifications which are necessary to church communion ought to be, in some way or other, made visible, is taken for granted by many on both sides. Indeed, without it the church could not be called ‘visible,’ or a society of such as profess the true religion, and, together with it, their subjection to Christ. Qualification for fellowship must, in a special manner, be made known to those who are to hold communion with the persons admitted, as called to be saints ; for this communion cannot, from the nature of the thing, be held, unless the character of saints be, in some way or other, made to appear. If it be said that there is no occasion for this character to be explicit, or the profession of it to be made otherwise than as their relation to a church declares them visible professors ; we must observe that that relation is only a presumptive evidence that they are Christians, and does not sufficiently distinguish them from the world, especially from that part of it who make an outward show of religion, and attend on several branches of public worship. This mere outward profession is certainly very remote from the character given of all those churches which we have an account of in the New Testament, concerning some of whom the apostle says, that ‘their faith’ was not only known to the particular society to which they belonged, but was ‘spread abroad,’ or ‘spoken of throughout the whole world.’^t This it could never have been, if they who were more immediately concerned to know it, had received no other conviction than what is the result of their joining with them in some external acts of worship. That Christian character must be made visible may be inferred, also, from what is generally allowed by those who explain the nature of the Lord’s Sup-

^t 1 Thess. i. 8, compared with Rom. i. 8.

per, which is a church ordinance, and lay down the qualifications of those who are deemed fit to partake of it, particularly that they are under an obligation to examine themselves, not only concerning their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, but concerning their faith to feed on him, their repentance, love, and new obedience, their trusting in his mercy, and rejoicing in his love, and that they are under a necessity of renewing the exercise of those graces which may render them meet for this ordinance.^u This is consonant to the practice of many of the reformed churches; who will not admit any into their communion, without receiving satisfaction as to their having these qualifications for this ordinance. Now, as the matter in controversy with them principally respects the manner in which this is to be given, and the concern of the church in it, we may infer that there is the highest reason that the church should receive satisfaction, as well as those who preside over it. They are obliged, in conscience, to have communion with the persons admitted, and to reckon them among the number of those who have been made partakers of the grace of Christ; and this they cannot well be said to do, unless the Christian character of the persons admitted be in some way or other made visible to them.

We are thus led to consider the manner in which a profession of Christianity is to be made visible,—whether it is to be done by every one in his own person, or whether a report of it by another in his name may be deemed sufficient. This I can reckon no other than a circumstance. Hence, I am of opinion that one of these ways is not so far to be insisted on, as that a person whose qualifications for it are not to be questioned, should be denied the privilege of church communion because he is unwilling to comply with it, as thinking that the main end designed by it may be as effectually answered by the other. If a person be duly qualified, as the apostle says concerning Timothy, to make ‘a good profession before many witnesses;’^x if his making such a profession may not only have a tendency to answer the end of giving satisfaction to the church, but be an expedient, in an uncommon degree, to promote their edification; if he have something remarkable to impart, and desire to bear his testimony to the grace of God which he has experienced in his own person, and thereby to induce others to join with him in giving him the glory of it; there is no law of God or nature which prohibits or forbids him to do it. Nor ought such a public profession to be censured, as if it could not be made without being liable to the common imputation that pride must be the necessary inducement to it; for that is such a censure and reproach as is unbecoming Christians, especially when it is alleged as an universal exception. I am far, however, from pleading for such a public profession as a necessary term of communion; nor do I think that a person's desire to give the church satisfaction in such a way, ought always to be complied with; for whatever occasion some may suppose they have for it, all are not fit to do it in such a way as may tend to the church's edification. There are various other ways by which a church may know that those who are proposed to its communion have a right to it, which I forbear to mention. But one of them is not to be so far insisted on, as that a refusal to comply with it rather than another, provided the general end be answered, should debar a person, otherwise qualified, from church communion. The church being satisfied, he is joined to them by their consent; and is, in consequence, laid under equal engagements with them, to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless.

2. We are now led to consider the exclusion of members from church communion. This is agreeable to the laws of society, as well as their admission into it; and hereby a becoming zeal is expressed for the glory of God, and a public testimony given against those who discover the insincerity of their professed subjection to Christ, which was the ground and reason of their being admitted into that relation which now they appear to have forfeited.

Now, the church has a right to exclude those from its communion who appear to be unqualified for it, or a reproach to it. Here I cannot but take notice of the opinion of the Erastians, that a church has no power, distinct from the civil government, to exclude persons from its communion. This opinion was advanced by Erastus, a

^u See Quest. clxxi, clxxiv.

^x 1 Tim. vi. 12.

physician in Germany, soon after the beginning of the Reformation. What seems to have given occasion to it, was the just prejudice which he entertained against the Popish doctrine, concerning the independence of the church upon the state. This was then, and is at this day, maintained and abused to such a degree, that if a clergyman insults the government, and sets himself at the head of a rebellion against his lawful prince, or is guilty of any other enormous crimes, he flies to the church for protection, and generally finds it there; especially if the king should, in any respect, disoblige him, or refuse to lay his crown at his feet, if he desire it. Opposition to this was, I say, a just prejudice; and gave first rise to the opinion of Erastus, who, in opposing one extreme, ran into another. The argument by which his opinion is generally supported, is, that the independence of the church upon the state tends to erect or set up one government within another.^y But this is not contrary to the law of nature and nations, when a smaller government is not co-ordinate with the other, but allowed and protected by it. The government of a family or corporation must be acknowledged by all to be a smaller government included in a greater. But will any one deny that they are inconsistent with it? May not a master admit into his family whom he pleases, or exclude them from being members of it? Or may not a corporation make the by-laws by which it is governed, without being supposed to interfere with the civil government? And, by a parity of reason, may not a church, pursuant not only to the laws of society, but to the rule which Christ has given, exclude members from its communion, without being supposed to subvert the fundamental laws of civil government? We do not deny that, if the church should pretend to inflict corporal punishments on its members, or make use of the civil sword, which is committed into the hand of the magistrate; or if it should act contrary to the laws of Christ, by defending, encouraging, or abetting those who are enemies to the civil government, or excluding them from those privileges which the laws of the land give them a right to, its doing so would be a notoriously unwarrantable instance of erecting one government within another, subversive of it. But this is not the design of excommunication, as one of those ordinances which Christ has given to his church.

We are now to consider the causes of inflicting censure on persons. These are no other than those things which, had they been before known, would have been a hinderance to their being admitted to church communion. Hence, when a person is guilty of those crimes which, had they been known before, he ought not to have been received, and when these are made to appear, he is deemed unqualified for that privilege which he was before admitted to partake of. On this account we generally say, that every one first excludes himself, by being guilty of those crimes which disqualify him for church communion, before he is to be excluded from it by the sentence of the church.—But, that we may be a little more particular on this subject, let us consider that they who disturb the tranquillity of the church, by the uneasiness of their tempers, or who are not only unwilling to comply with the method of its government, but endeavour to make others so, or who are restless in their attempts to bring innovations into it, or to propagate doctrines which are contrary to scripture, and the general faith of the church founded on it, though these be not directly subversive of the gospel, yet, inasmuch as the persons are not satisfied in retaining their own sentiments, without giving disturbance to others who cannot adhere to them, such, I think, ought to be separated from the communion of the church, purely out of a principle of self-preservation; though it is not the church's immediate duty to judge the state so much as the temper of the persons, whom they withdraw from.—Again, if a person propagate a doctrine subversive of the gospel, or of that faith on which the church is founded, he is to be excluded. It is such an one, as I humbly conceive, whom the apostle styles ‘an heretic,’ and advises Titus ‘to reject,’ and of whom he speaks as one that ‘is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.’^z Some think that the person here spoken of, is one who pretends to believe one doctrine, but really believes another which is of a most pernicious tendency; that he is to be rejected, not for his sentiments, but for his insincerity; and that on this account he is said to be ‘self-condemned.’^a But I cannot acquiesce in this sense of the text. For though there may be some

in the world who think to find their account, gain popular applause, or, some way or other, serve their worldly interest, by pretending to believe those doctrines which they really deny ; yet this cannot be truly said of the person whom the apostle, in this scripture, describes as ‘an heretic.’ He is, indeed, represented as inconsistent with himself ; and his being so is supposed to be known and alleged, as an aggravation of the charge on which his expulsion from the religious society of which he was a member is founded ; but did ever any man propagate one doctrine, and tell the world that he believed another, so that he might, for this conduct, be convicted as an hypocrite ? Certainly his acting thus could not be known without his own confession ; and the church could not censure him, but upon sufficient evidence. It may be said that they might know this by divine inspiration. But though it is true that they were favoured with divine inspiration in that age, in which, among other extraordinary gifts, they had that of ‘discerning spirits ;’ yet it is greatly to be questioned, whether they ever proceeded against any one upon extraordinary intimations, without some apparent matter of accusation, which was known by those who had not this extraordinary gift. For, if they had a liberty to proceed against persons in such a way, why did not our Saviour reject Judas, who was one of that society who attended on his ministry, when he knew him to be an hypocrite, or ‘self-condemned,’ in a most notorious degree ? Yet our Saviour did not reject him ; and the reason, doubtless, was, that he designed that his churches, in succeeding ages, should, in all their judicial proceedings, go upon evidence which might easily be known by all, when they expelled any one from their communion. Besides, if the sense contended for be the true sense of the text, and the ground on which persons are to be rejected, no one can be known to be self-condemned now ; for we have no extraordinary intimations since miraculous gifts ceased ; nor can we believe that any thing was instituted as essential to the church’s proceedings, in the modes of government, which could not be put in practice except in the apostolic age ; and if so, then having recourse to extraordinary discerning of spirits, as a foundation of proceeding against persons to be excluded from church communion, will not serve the purpose for which it is alleged. It must be concluded, therefore, that the person here said to be ‘self-condemned,’ was deemed so, not because he pretended to hold that faith which he really denied, but because his present professed sentiments were the reverse of what he had before pretended to hold, his profession of which was a term on which he was admitted into the church. In this sense he is said to be ‘self-condemned ;’ his present errors being a contradiction to the faith which he then professed, in common with the rest of the society of which he was admitted a member.—Further, persons are to be excluded from church communion for immoral practices, which not only contradict their professed subjection to Christ, but argue them to be in an unconverted state. When they were first received into the church, they were supposed, by a judgment of charity, to be Christ’s subjects and servants. Their own profession, which was not then contradicted by any apparent blemishes in their conversation, was the foundation of this opinion, which the church was then bound to entertain concerning them. But, when they are guilty of any crimes which are contrary to their professed subjection to Christ, the church is to take away the privilege which they had before granted them. For by these crimes they appear to be disqualified for their communion ; and the church’s excluding them is necessary, inasmuch as by it they express a just detestation of every thing which would be a reproach to them, or an instance of disloyalty to Christ, or rebellion against him as their Head and Saviour.

We are now to speak concerning the method of proceeding in excluding persons from church communion. We must consider this as a judicial act, and therefore not to be done without trying and judging impartially the merits of the cause. A crime committed is supposed to be first known by particular persons, who are members of the church ; or if any injury be done, whereby another has received just matter of offence, he is supposed to be first apprized of it before it be brought before the church. In this case, our Saviour has expressly given direction concerning the method in which he is to proceed. He says, ‘If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then

take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”^b If this scripture be rightly understood, it will give great light to the method of proceeding in this matter. Here we must consider, that the crime is called ‘a trespass.’ Accordingly, it is, in some respects, injurious to others; and by its being so, the offender contracts some degree of guilt for which he is to be reprovèd. Were it otherwise, there would be no room for a private rebuke or admonition, in order to bring him to repentance; nor, upon his obstinate refusal to repent, would the church have ground to proceed in excluding him from its communion. We are not to suppose, however, that the crime is of such a nature as is, in itself, inconsistent with a state of grace, or as affords matter of open scandal to the Christian name, as if a person were guilty of adultery, theft, or some other notorious crime; for, in this case, it would not be sufficient for the person who is apprized of it to give the offender a friendly and gentle reproof, so that, upon his confessing his fault, and repenting of it, all farther proceedings against him ought to be stopped. For, in such a case, I humbly conceive that he who has received information concerning it, ought to make it known to the church, that so the matter may not only be fully charged upon him, but his repentance be as visible as the scandal he has brought to religion, by his crime, has been. If I know a person to be a traitor to his prince, a murderer, or guilty of any other crime whereby he has forfeited his life, it is not sufficient for me to reprove him privately for it, in order to bring him to repentance; but I must discover it to proper persons, that he may be brought to condign punishment. So, in this case, if a person be guilty of a crime which in itself disqualifies for church communion, and brings a reproach on the ways of God, the church ought to express their public resentment against it; which will tend to secure the honour of religion. Hence, it ought to be brought before them immediately; and they ought to proceed against the offender, by excluding him from their communion, even though, for the present, he seem to express some degree of sorrow for his crime, as being made public. And if they judge that his repentance is sincere, and that the world has sufficient ground to conclude it to be so, then they may express their forgiveness of it, and so withdraw the censure they have passed upon him. But, in crimes of a lesser nature, a private admonition ought to be given; and if this be to no purpose, but the person go on in his sin, so that it appears to be habitual, and his repentance not sincere, the cause is then to be brought before the church. But, in order to this, the person who first reprovèd the offender must take one or two more, that they may join in the second reproof; and if all this be to no purpose, then they are to appear as evidences against him, and the church is to give him a public admonition; and if this solemn ordinance prove ineffectual, then he is to be excluded. His exclusion is styled his ‘being to them as an heathen man or publican;’ that is, they have no farther relation to him, any more than they have to the heathen or publicans, or no immediate care of him, otherwise than as they are to desire to know whether the censure inflicted on him be blessed for his advantage.

We are now led to consider the temper with which the sentence of exclusion from church communion ought to be denounced, and the consequences of it, with respect to him who falls under it. The same frame of spirit ought to discover itself in this as in all other reproofs for sin committed. There ought to be a zeal expressed for the glory of God, and, at the same time, compassion to the souls of those who have rendered themselves obnoxious to it; without the least degree of hatred being felt toward their persons. The crime is to be aggravated in proportion to its nature, so that he who has committed it may be brought under conviction, and be humbled for his sin; yet he is to be made sensible that his spiritual advantage is intended by the discipline to which he is subjected. This is very contrary to those methods which were taken in the corrupt state of the Jewish church; who, when they excommunicated persons, denounced several curses against them, and whose consequent behaviour was altogether unjustifiable.

We have an account, in some of their writings, of two degrees of excommunication practised among them. One of these deprived them of only some privileges which that church enjoyed, but not of all. Another carried in it more terror, by reason of several anathemas annexed to it; which were a great abuse and perversion of the design of the law relating to the curses which were to be denounced on mount Ebal.^c This law was given, not as a form to be used in excommunication, but to show the Israelites what sin deserved, and to be an expedient to prevent those sins which would expose them to the divine wrath and curse.^d The Jews pretend, too, to have a warrant for their excommunications by anathema from Deborah and Barak's cursing Meroz,^e and from Joshua's denouncing a curse upon him who should rebuild Jericho.^f But these instances do not give countenance to their proceedings; for we must distinguish between anathemas denounced by immediate divine direction by persons who had the spirit of prophecy, and those curses which were denounced by others who were altogether destitute of it.^g—Moreover, as the Jews, in the degenerate ages of their church, abused the ordinance of excommunication, so they discovered such a degree of hatred to those whom they excommunicated, as ought not to be expressed to the vilest of men. An instance of this we have in their behaviour towards the Samaritans; who, according to the account we have from Jewish writers, were excommunicated in Ezra's time, for building a temple on mount Gerizzim, and setting up corrupt worship there, in opposition to that which ought to have been performed in the temple at Jerusalem. For this they were justly excluded from the Jewish church;^h but their morose behaviour towards them was unwarrantable. That there was an irreconcilable enmity between them, appears from the woman of Samaria's answer to our Saviour, when desiring her to give him water; and it is evident that he was far from approving of the behaviour of the Jews towards them. The woman was amazed that he should ask water of her, and said to him, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans;'ⁱ that is, they retain the old rancour and prejudice against them, that they will not have any dealings with them which involve the least obligation on either side. These things were consequences of excommunication, which they had no ground for in scripture.

As to the Christian church, they seem to have followed the Jews too much in that in which they are not to be imitated. Hence arose the distinction between the greater and the lesser excommunication; which is agreeable, though expressed in other words, to that which we have already mentioned. Their denouncing anathemas against persons excommunicated by them, how much soever it might have argued their zeal against the crimes they committed, is no example for us to follow. It is beyond dispute, that they endeavoured to make this censure as much dreaded as was possible, to deter men from committing those crimes which might deserve it. Tertullian calls it, 'an anticipation of the future judgment;'^k and Cyprian supposes a person on whom it is inflicted to be 'far from a state of salvation.'^l Moreover, some have supposed that persons, when excommunicated, were possessed by the devil. This they conclude to be the sense of the apostle,^m when he speaks of 'delivering' such 'unto Satan.'ⁿ They think that Satan actually seized and took possession

^c Deut. xxvii.

^d The former of these, Jewish writers call נִדְּוִי *Niddui*. The latter they call חֶרֶם *Cherem*, or שְׁמָתָא *Schammatha*. This was performed with several execrations, by which they, as it were, bound them over to suffer both temporal and eternal punishments. See Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebr. and Talmud.* in Cor. v. 5.

^e Judges v. 23.

^f Josh. vi. 26.

^g See more on this subject in Vitringa de *Synagog.* Vet. page 745, and also the form used, and the instrument drawn up, when a person was excommunicated and anathematized, in Selden de *Jure Nat. et Gent.* lib. iv. cap. 7. and Buxt. *Lex. Talm.* in voce *CHEREM*.

^h See an account of the manner of their excommunication, and the curse denounced against them at that time, and the first cause of it, taken from Josephus and other Jewish writers, in Lightfoot's *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 538—540, and vol. i. page 599.

ⁱ John iv. 9.

^k Vid. Tert. *Apol.* cap. 39. 'Summum futuri judicii præjudicium.'

^l Vid. Cyp. de *Orat. Dom.* 'Timendum est, et orandum, ne dum quis abstentus seperatur a Christi corpore, procul remaneat a salute.'

^m 1 Cor. v. 5.

ⁿ Vid. Cave's *Prim. Christ.* Part III. cap. 5.

of them; that God permitted this as an expedient to strike terror into the minds of men, to prevent many sins from being committed; and that it was more necessary at the time when the church was destitute of the assistance of the civil magistrate, who took no care to defend the church, or to punish crimes committed by its members. But I cannot think that there was ever such a power granted to the church, how much soever the necessity of affairs might be supposed to require it. We read nothing of it in the writings of those Fathers who lived in the early ages, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, or Cyprian; who would, doubtless, have taken some notice of this extraordinary miraculous punishment attending excommunication, had there been any such thing. Some of them, indeed, speak of the church's being favoured, in some instances, after the apostle's time,^o with the extraordinary gift of miracles, and particularly that of casting out devils; but we have no account of the devil's possessing any upon their being cast out of the church. We read in scripture, indeed, of 'delivering' a person excommunicated 'to Satan.'^p But I cannot think that the apostle intends any more by the phrase than a person's being declared to be in Satan's kingdom, that is, in the world, where Satan rules over the children of disobedience. If, too, his crime be so great as is inconsistent with a state of grace, he must, without doubt, be reckoned a servant of Satan, and in this sense be delivered to him. Besides, there is a particular design of the delivering to Satan mentioned by the apostle, namely, 'the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;' so that the person's good is to be intended by it, that he may be humbled, brought to repentance, and afterwards received again into the bosom of the church.

We have thus considered the general description of a church, the matter and form of it, and the power granted to it of receiving persons into its communion or excluding them from it. From what has been stated on these subjects, we may infer that nearness of habitation, how much soever it may contribute to the answering of some ends of church communion, which cannot be attained by those who live many miles distant from one another, is not sufficient to constitute persons church members, or to give them a right to the privileges which attend that relation. Parochial churches have no foundation in scripture; for they want both the matter and form of a church; nor are they any other than a human constitution.—Again, the scripture gives no account of the church as national or provincial. Though persons have a right to many civil privileges, as born in particular nations or provinces, it does not follow that they are professedly subject to Christ, or united together in the bonds of the gospel. If a church which styles itself national, exclude persons from its communion, whether it be for real or supposed crimes, it takes away a right which it had no power to confer, but which is founded on the laws of men, which are very distinct from those which Christ has given to his churches.

V. We are now led to consider the government of the church, by those officers which Christ has appointed in it. Tyranny and anarchy are extremes, inconsistent

^o Justin Martyr tells the Jews, [Vid. ejusd. Colloq. cum Tryph.] that the church, in his time, had the gift of prophecy. This Eusebius [in Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. 17.] takes notice of, and, doubtless, believed to be true in fact; though it is very much questioned whether there were any such thing in the fourth century, in which he lived. Gregory Nyssen and Basil, who lived a little after Eusebius, assert that there were many miracles wrought in the third century by Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea, for which reason he is called Thaumaturgus; though it is not improbable that they might be imposed on in some things which they relate concerning him, especially when they compare him with the apostles and ancient prophets, not excepting Moses himself in this respect. It is certain that many things are related of his miracles which seem too fabulous to obtain credit. Yet there is ground enough, from all that they say, to suppose that he wrought some, and that, therefore, in his time, they had not wholly ceased. [Vid. Greg. Nyss. in vit. Greg. Thaum. and Basil de Sp. Sanct. cap. 29.] Origen affirms that, in his time, the Christians had a power to perform many miraculous cures, and to foretell things to come. [Vid. lib. i. Contr. Cels.] * *Και ισχυνη του αγιου ικεινου Πνευματος παρα χριστιανοις σωζεται εξεπαδουσι δαιμονας και πολλας ιασεις επιτελουνσι και ορωσι τινα κατα το βουλημα του λογου περι μελλοντων.* If this had not been true, Celsus, who wanted neither malice nor a will to oppose, would certainly have detected the fallacy. Tertullian [Vid. Apologet. cap. 23.] appeals to it for the proof of the Christian religion, offering to lay his life and reputation at stake, if the Christians, when publicly calling upon God, did not cure those who were possessed with devils.

p 1 Cor. v. 5.

with the good of civil society, and contrary to the law of nature, and are sufficiently guarded against by the government which Christ has fixed in his church. He has appointed officers to secure its peace and order, and has limited their power, and given directions which concern the exercise of it, so that the church may be governed without oppression, its religious rights maintained, and the glory of God and the mutual edification of its members promoted.

We have already considered those extraordinary officers whom Christ set over the gospel-church, when it was first constituted, namely, the apostles and evangelists. But there are others whom he has given to his churches. These are either such as are appointed to bear rule, more especially in what respects the promoting of faith and order, who are styled pastors and elders; or they are such as have the oversight of the secular affairs of the church, and the trust of providing for the necessities of the poor committed to them, who are called deacons.

As to the former, namely, pastors and elders, we often read of them in the New Testament. All, however, are not agreed in their sentiments as to whether the elders spoken of in scripture are distinct officers from pastors, or whether Christ has appointed two sorts of them, namely, preaching and ruling elders. Some think the apostle distinguishes between them, when he says, 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.'^a The 'double honour' here intended, seems to be not only civil respect, but maintenance, as appears from the following words, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his reward.' Now, the parties to whom I refer suppose that this maintenance belongs to such only as 'labour in word and doctrine,' and not to the other elders who are said to 'rule well.' They hence conclude that there are elders who 'rule well,' distinct from those who 'labour in word and doctrine.' Others, indeed, think that the apostle, in this text, speaks only of the latter sort; and then the stress of his argument is laid principally on the word 'labouring,' as if he had said, 'Let every one who preaches the gospel and presides over the church, have that honour conferred on him which is his due; but let this be greater in proportion to the pains and diligence which he shows for the church's edification.' I cannot but think, however, since it is agreeable to the laws of society, and not in the least repugnant to any thing we read in scripture concerning the office of an elder, that, in case of emergency, when the necessity of the church requires it, or when the work of preaching and ruling is too much for a pastor, the church being very numerous, it is advisable that some should be chosen from among themselves, to assist him in managing the affairs of government and performing some branches of his office distinct from that of preaching, a work to which they are not called, as not being duly qualified for it. These are helpers or assistants in government; and their office may have in it a very great expediency; as in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, and the direction and advice of those who are men of prudence and esteem in the church will be very conducive to maintain its peace and order. But I cannot think that the office of ruling elders is necessary in smaller churches, in which the pastors need not their assistance. [See Note F, page 43.]

We shall now speak concerning the office of a pastor. This consists of two branches, namely, preaching the word and administering the sacraments on the one hand, and performing the office of a ruling elder on the other.

We may first consider him as qualified and called to preach the gospel. This is an honourable and important work, and has always been reckoned so by those who have had any concern for the promoting of the glory of God in the world. The apostle Paul was very thankful to Christ that he conferred upon him the honour of being employed in this work, or, as he expresses it, that 'he counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry.'^r Elsewhere he concludes, that it is necessary that they who engage in this work be sent by God, 'How shall they preach, except they be sent?'^s This is a necessary prerequisite to the pastoral office, as much as speech is necessary to an orator, or conduct to a governor. Yet persons may be employed in the work of the ministry, who are not pastors. These, if they faith-

fully discharge the work they are called to, may be reckoned a blessing to the world, and a valuable part of the church's treasure. Considered as distinct from pastors, however, they are not reckoned among its officers. This is a subject which very well deserves our consideration. But, as we have an account elsewhere^t of the qualifications and call of ministers to preach the gospel, and of the manner in which their work is to be done, we pass the subject over at present.

We shall next consider a minister as invested with the pastoral office, and so related to a particular church. The characters by which those who are called to it are described in the New Testament, besides that of a pastor, are a bishop or overseer, and a presbyter or elder, who labours in word and doctrine. The world, it is certain, is very much divided in their sentiments about this matter. Some conclude that a bishop is not only distinct from, but superior, both in order and degree, to those who are styled presbyters or elders; while others think either that there is no difference between them, or, at least, that it is not so great that they should be reckoned distinct officers in a church. The account we have, in scripture, of this matter, seems to be somewhat different from what were the sentiments of the church in following ages. Sometimes we read of several bishops in one church. Thus the apostle, writing to the church at Philippi, directs his epistle to the bishops and deacons.^u Elsewhere he seems to call the same persons bishops and elders or presbyters; for he sent to Ephesus, 'and called the elders of the church,'^x and advised them to 'take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over whom the Holy Ghost had made them overseers' or bishops.^y At another time, he charges Titus to 'ordain elders,' or presbyters, 'in every city.' He then gives the character of those whom he was to ordain, bidding him take care that they were 'blameless,' and had other qualifications necessary for this office; and, in assigning a reason for his doing so, he adds, 'For a bishop must be blameless,' &c. Here it is plain, the words 'elder' and 'bishop' are indifferently used by him, as respecting the same person. The apostle Peter^z also addresses himself to 'the elders' of the churches to whom he writes, styling himself 'an elder together with them,'^a and 'a witness of the sufferings of Christ,' which was his character as an apostle; and he exhorts them to perform the office of 'bishops,' or 'overseers,'^b as the word which we render 'taking the oversight' signifies; whence it is evident that elders and presbyters had the character of bishops, from the work they were to perform. Moreover, the venerable assembly who met at Jerusalem to discuss an important question brought before them by Paul and Barnabas, is said to have consisted of the apostles and elders.^c Now, if bishops had been not only distinct from elders but a superior order to them, they would have been mentioned as such, and, doubtless, have met with them; but it seems probable that they are included in the general character of 'elders.' Some think that the same persons are called bishops, because they had the oversight of their respective churches, and elders, because they were qualified for this work by the age and experience to which they had, for the most part, arrived; as the word 'elder' signifies not only one who is invested with an office,^d but one who, by reason of his age, and of the wisdom which often attends it, is fitted to discharge its duties.^e

We read nothing in scripture of diocesan churches, or bishops over them; how much soever diocesan episcopacy was pleaded for in many following ages. They who maintain it generally have recourse to the writings of the Fathers and church historians; but were the proofs taken thence more strong and conclusive than they are, they would not be sufficient to support its divine right. I shall not enlarge on this particular branch of the controversy; as it has been handled with much learning and judgment by many others,^f who refer to the writings of the Fathers of the three first centuries, to prove that churches were no larger in those times than one person could have the oversight of, and that these chose their own bishops. Some think, indeed, that there is ground to conclude, from what we find in the writings

^t See Quest. clviii. clix.

^u Phil. i. 1.

^x Acts xx. 17.

^y Verse 28.

^z 1 Pet. v. 1.

^a συμπρεσβυτερος.

^b επισκοπουντες

^c Acts xv. 6.

^d Legatus.

^e 1 Tim. v. 1.

^f See Caldecott, Altar, Damasc. Jameson's Fundamentals of the Hierarchy examined; Forrester's Hierarchical Bishops' Claim, &c.; and Clarkson's 'No Evidence for Diocesan Churches,' and his 'Diocesan Churches not yet discovered,' &c.

of Ignatius, Tertullian, Cyprian, and other Fathers in these ages, that there was a superiority of bishops to presbyters, at least in degree, though not in order; that the presbyter performed all the branches of the work which properly belonged to bishops, with only this difference, that it was done with their leave, or by their order, or in their absence; and that, there being several elders in the same church, one of these, when a bishop died, was ready to succeed him in his office. Some of the Fathers speak also of the church as parochial, and contradistinguished from diocesan. But as it does not appear, by their writings, that the parochial churches of which they speak had no bond of union but nearness of habitation, I cannot so readily conclude that their church state depended principally on this political circumstance. I am of opinion rather that Christians thought it most convenient for those to enter into a church relation, who, by reason of the nearness of their situation to each other, could better perform the duties which were incumbent on them as church members. It appears, too, from several things occasionally mentioned by the Fathers, that the church admitted none into its communion but those whom they judged qualified for it, not only by understanding the doctrines of Christianity, but by a conduct becoming their profession; and that they caused them to remain a considerable time in a state of probation, admitting them to attend on the prayers and instructions of the church, but ordering them to withdraw before the Lord's Supper was administered. These are sometimes called 'hearers,' by Cyprian, at other times, 'candidates,' but most commonly 'catechumens.' And there were persons appointed not only to instruct them, but to examine what proficiency they made in religion, in order to their being received into the church. In this state of trial they continued generally two or three years.^g Such was the care taken that persons might not deceive themselves and the church, by their being joined in communion with it, without having the necessary qualifications. This was a very different state of things from that of parochial churches, as understood and defended by many in our day. Hence, the calling of churches 'parishes,' in the three first centuries, was only a circumstantial description of them. In every one of these churches, too, there was one who was called a bishop or overseer, with a convenient number of elders or presbyters; and it is observed by the learned writer just referred to, that the churches were at first comparatively small, and not exceeding the bigness of the city or village in which they were situated, each of which was under the care or oversight of its respective pastor or bishop. This was the state of the church, more especially, in the three first centuries. But, if we descend a little lower to the fourth century, when it arrived at a peaceable and flourishing state, we shall find that its government was very much altered. Then, indeed, the bishops had the oversight of larger dioceses than they had before. This proceeded from the aspiring temper of particular persons,^h who were not content till they had added some neighbouring parishes to their own; and so their churches became very large, till they extended themselves over whole provinces. But even this was complained of by some as an abuse. Chrysostom frequently insisted on the inconvenience of bishops having churches too large for them to take the oversight of, and of their not so much regarding the qualifications as the number of those over whom they presided; and he signifies his earnest desire that those under his care might excel rather in piety than in number, as it would be an expedient for his better discharging the work committed to him.ⁱ

We have thus spoken concerning the character and distinction of the pastors of churches, together with the form of the church in the first ages of Christianity, and what is observed by many concerning the agreement and difference which there was between bishops and presbyters. But this last point has been so largely in-

^g See Clarkson's *Primitive Episcopacy*, chap. 7, in which he observes, that it was decreed, by some councils, that they should continue in this state of probation at least two or three years; and that Augustin continued thus long a catechumen, as appears from the account that Father gives of his age when converted to Christianity, and afterwards of his being received into the church by Ambrose.

^h See *Primitive Episcopacy*, pp. 189—197.

ⁱ See Clarkson's *Primitive Episcopacy*, chap. 8, in which he refers to several places in the writings of that excellent Father to the same purpose.

sisted on by many who have written on both sides of the question, and the controversy turns so very much on critical remarks on occasional passages taken out of the writings of the Fathers without recourse to scripture, that it is less necessary or agreeable to our present design to enlarge on it. We may observe, however, that some of those who have written in defence of diocesan episcopacy, have been forced to acknowledge that Jerome, Augustin, Ambrose, Chrysostom, in the fourth century, and Sedulius, Primatius, Theodoret, and Theophylact, in some following ages, all held the identity of both name and order of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church.^k Jerome, in particular, is more express on this subject than any of them, and proves it from some arguments taken from scripture. He also speaks of the distinction between bishops and elders, as the result of those divisions by which the peace and order of the church was broken; and says that it was no other than a human constitution.^l This opinion of Jerome is largely defended by a learned writer;^m who shows that it is agreeable to the sentiments of other Fathers who lived before and after him.

Having thus spoken concerning a pastor as styled a bishop or presbyter, we shall now consider him as invested with his office, whereby he becomes related to a particular church of Christ. That no one is pastor of the catholic church, was observed under a foregoing Head.ⁿ We there showed that the church, when styled catholic, is not to be reckoned the seat of government; that, therefore, we must consider a pastor as presiding over a particular church; and, that, in order to his doing so, he must be called or chosen, on their part, to take the oversight of them, and comply with the invitation on his own part, and afterwards be solemnly invested with this office, or set apart to it. Let us now consider what more especially respects the church, who have a right to choose or call qualified persons, to engage in this service, and to perform the two branches of the pastoral office, namely, instructing and governing. This right of a church to choose their pastor is not only agreeable to the laws of society, but is plainly taught in scripture, and appears to have been the sentiment and practice of the church in the three first centuries. The church's power of choosing their own officers, is sufficiently evident from scripture. If there were any exception, it must be in those instances in which there was an extraordinary hand of providence in the appointment of officers over the churches; but even then God sometimes referred the matter to their own choice. Thus, when Moses made several persons rulers over Israel, to bear a part of the burden which before was wholly laid on him, he refers the matter to their own election. 'Take ye wise men,' says he, 'and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.'^o The gospel-church, also, which at first consisted of 'about an hundred and twenty' members,^p when an apostle was to be chosen to succeed Judas, 'appointed two' out of their number, and prayed that God would 'signify whether of them he had chosen;' and, when they had 'given forth their lots, the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.'^q So we render the words; but if they had been rendered, 'he was numbered among the eleven apostles by common suffrage,' or vote, the translation would have been more expressive of the sense.^r Soon after, we read of the choice of other officers in the church, namely, deacons;^s and the apostles said to the church, 'Look ye out among you seven men, whom we may appoint over this business.' And afterwards, in their appointing elders or pastors over particular churches, we

k See Stillingfleet Iren. p. 276.

l Vid. Hieron. in Tit. i. 5. 'Sicut ergo Presbyteri sciunt se ex Ecclesia consuetudine, ei qui sibi præpositus fuerit esse subjectos, ita Episcopi noverint se magis consuetudine quam dispositionis dominicæ veritate, Presbyteris esse majores, et in commune debere Ecclesiam regere.'

m Vid. Blondel. Apol. pro Sent. Hieron.

n See Sect. 'The Visible Church,' under Quest. lxi—lxiv. Some, indeed, choose to say that persons who stand more immediately related to their respective churches, are pastors in the catholic church, though not of it; which, if the words be rightly understood, does not militate against what we assert.

o Dent. i. 13.

p Acts i. 15.

q Verses 23—25.

r Συγκατεψηφισθη μετα των ενδικα αποστολων, which Beza renders, 'Communibus calculis allectus est cum undecum apostolis.'

s Acts vi. 3.

read of their choosing them by vote or suffrage. Thus it is said, ‘When they had ordained them elders in every church.’^t So we translate the words;^u but they might be better rendered, ‘When they had chosen elders in every church by the lifting up of the hand.’ This lifting up of the hand was, and is at this day, a common mode of electing persons either to civil or religious offices. And it might be easily proved from the Fathers, that it was the universal practice of the church in the three first centuries, and not wholly laid aside in following ages, till civil policy and secular interest usurped and invaded the church’s rights. But this argument having been judiciously managed by Dr. Owen,^x I pass it over, and proceed to consider the question of ordination.

A pastor having been chosen by the church, and having confirmed his election by his own consent, then follows his being separated or publicly set apart to his office, with fasting and prayer. This is generally called ordination. It does not, indeed, constitute a person a pastor of a church; so that his election, confirmed by his consent, would not have been valid without it. Yet it is not only agreeable to the scripture rule, but highly expedient, that, as his ministerial acts are to be public, his entering into his office should be so likewise, and, in order to this, that other pastors or elders should join in the solemnity; for, though they do not confer the office upon him, yet they testify their approbation of the person chosen to it; and so a foundation is laid for that harmony of pastors and churches which tends to the glory of God, and the promoting of the common interest. Ordination also protects against several inconveniences which might follow without it; since it is possible that a church may choose a person to be their pastor, whose call to, and qualification for, his office may be questioned. It is, moreover, natural to suppose, that they would expect their proceedings in the settlement of their pastor to be justified and defended by other pastors and churches, so that the communion of churches may be maintained. But how can this be done, if no expedient be used to render the matter public and visible; which this way of ordaining or setting apart to the pastoral office does? For they who join in it testify their approbation of what is done, as being agreeable to the rule of the gospel.

Public inauguration or investiture in the pastoral office, is, for the most part, performed with imposition of hands. As this is so frequently mentioned in scripture, and appears to have been practised by the church in all succeeding ages, it will be reckoned by many to be no other than a fruitless attempt, if not an offending against the generation of God’s people, to call in question its warrantableness. It is certain that it was used in the early ages of the church, particularly in public and solemn benedictions. Thus Jacob laid his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, when he blessed them. It was used also in conferring political offices;^y in healing diseases in a miraculous way;^z and sometimes in receiving persons who were eminently converted to the Christian faith and baptized.^a These things are very evident from scripture. Yet it may be observed, that, in several of these instances, it has, for some ages past, been laid aside, by reason of the discontinuance of those extraordinary gifts which were signified by it. There was, doubtless, something extraordinary in the patriarchal benediction; as Jacob did not only pray for a blessing on the sons of Joseph, but, as a prophet, he foretold that the divine blessing, which he spake of, should descend on their posterity. Hence we do not read of this ceremony having been used in the more common instances, when persons who

^t Acts xiv. 23.

^u *Χειροτονησαντες αυτοις πρεσβυτερους κατ’ ἐκκλησιαν*, ‘Cum ipsi per suffragia creassent per singulas ecclesias presbyteros.’ The learned Dr. Owen, in his ‘True Nature of a Gospel-church,’ &c. pp. 68—71. proves, that the word *χειροτονειν*, in several Greek writers, is used to signify the choice of a person to office by suffrage or vote, which was done by lifting up the hand. And he observes that all our old English translations render the words, in this text, ordaining or creating elders by the suffrage of the disciples. He farther observes that the word is but once more used in the New Testament, namely, in 2 Cor. viii. 19, where it is rendered, ‘he was chosen,’ &c. See more to this purpose in the place just-mentioned.

^x See the ‘True Nature of a Gospel-church,’ pp. 78—83. where it appears, from Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, that this was practised in the three first centuries, and from Blondel’s Apology, which he refers to, that it was continued in some following ages.

^y Numb. xxvii. 18. Deut. xxxiv. 9.

^z 2 Kings v. 11; Mark vii. 32.

^a Acts ix. 17.

were not endowed with the spirit of prophecy, put up prayers or supplications to God for others. Though it was sometimes used in the designation of persons to political offices ; yet it was so in those times in which the church of the Jews was under the divine theocracy, and when extraordinary gifts were expected to qualify persons for the office they were called to perform. As to the cases mentioned in scripture, of imposition of hands in the ordination or setting apart of ministers to the pastoral office, when extraordinary gifts were conferred, or when these gifts were bestowed on persons who were converted to the Christian faith and baptized ; in all these and similar cases, the ceremony was used as a significant sign and ordinance for their faith. But it is certain that the conferring of extraordinary gifts to qualify for the pastoral office, is not now to be expected ; so that it must either be proved that something besides this was signified, which may be now expected, or the use of the ceremony, as a significant sign or an ordinance for our faith, cannot be well defended. If it be said that the conferring of the pastoral office is signified by it, it must be proved that they who use the sign have a right to confer the office, or to constitute a person a pastor of a particular church. If these things cannot easily be proved, we must suppose that the external action is used without its having the nature of a sign ; and then it is to be included among things which are indifferent ; and a person's right to exercise the pastoral office, does not depend on its use, nor, on the other hand, is that right to be called in question by reason of the neglect of it. To conclude this Head, if the only thing intended by the ceremony be what Augustin understood to be the meaning of imposition of hands on those who were baptized in his day, namely, that it was merely a praying over persons,^b I have nothing to object against it. But if more be intended by it, and especially if it be reckoned so necessary to the pastoral office that the duties of that office cannot be acceptably performed without it, there may be just reason for many to except against it.

We shall now consider the pastor as discharging his office. This more immediately respects the church to which he stands related, especially in what concerns his presiding or ruling over them. If there be more elders joined with him, with whom he is to act in concert, they constitute what is generally called a Consistory. This I cannot think essential to the exercise of that government which Christ has appointed ; though sometimes, as was before observed, it may be expedient. But whether there be one or more who bear rule in the church, their power is subjected to certain limitations, agreeably to the laws of society, and particularly to those which Christ has given to his church. As the nature of the office we are speaking of does not argue that the church is without any government, or under such a democracy as infers confusion, or supposes that every one has a right to give laws to the whole body ; so it has not those ingredients of absolute and unlimited monarchy or aristocracy which are inconsistent with liberty. We suppose, therefore, that a pastor and other elders, if such be joined with him, are not to rule according to their own will, or to act separately from the church in the affairs of government, but are to rule and act in their name, and with their consent. Accordingly, they are generally styled the instruments by which the church exerts that power which Christ has given it ; and a church, when officers are set over it, is said to be organized. This is called, in scripture, the power of the keys ; which, agreeably to the laws of society, is originally in them, and is to be exercised in their name, and with their consent, by their officers ; so that a pastor, or other elders with him, have no power to act without the consent of the church, in receiving members into or excluding them from its communion. This I cannot but think to be agreeable to the law of nature, on which the laws of society are founded, as well as to the gospel rule. I am aware that many of the reformed churches who allow that this power is originally in them, conclude, notwithstanding, that it may be consigned over to the pastor and elders, and that it actually is consigned over to them when they are chosen to their office. The principal argument by which this opinion is generally defended, is, that because they are fit to teach, they are fit to govern, with-

^b Vid. Aug. de Bapt. contr. Donat. lib. iii. cap. 6. Quid est aliud manus impositio quam oratio super hominem ?

out being directed in any thing relating to government. But the question is not concerning the fitness of persons, which is not to be denied, but whether the church ought to divest itself of that power which Christ has given it ; especially when it may be exerted without anarchy or confusion,—which it certainly may, if it be not abused, or the due exercise of it neglected. In order to this, a church officer is to prepare matters for the church, that nothing trifling, vain, or contentious may be brought before them ; and to communicate them to it, to desire to know their sentiments about them, and to declare, improve, and act according to these. There are, indeed, some branches of the pastoral office which are to be performed without their immediate direction ; such as preaching the word, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, endeavouring to satisfy those who are under doubts or scruples of conscience, and exciting and encouraging all to perform those duties, to which their professed subjection to Christ and their relation to his church oblige them.

We shall now consider pastors or elders of churches, as employed occasionally in using their best endeavours to assist others in some difficulties in which their direction is needed or desired. An assembly of them for this purpose is what we call a synod. This word is very much disrelished by some in our age ; and it were to be wished that there had been no occasion for this prejudice, from the account we have of the abuses practised by synods and councils in former ages. These abuses gave great uneasiness to Gregory Nazianzen, who complains of confusions and want of temper, which were too notorious in some synods in the age in which he lived.^c Afterwards we find that almost all the corruptions which were brought into the church were countenanced by some synod or other. Many of the synods assumed to themselves a power of making laws which were to be received with the same obligation as if they had been delivered by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They also opened a door to persecution ; so that they, in many instances, took away not only the religious but the civil rights of mankind. It will, therefore, be thought strange that I should so much as mention the word ; but, though I detest every thing of this nature which has been practised by them, it is not impossible to treat on the subject in an unexceptionable manner. It is certainly a warrantable practice, founded in the law of nature, for persons who cannot compromise a matter in debate, to desire the advice of others. The same is, doubtless, true in religious matters. We suppose, therefore, that there may be some matters debated in a church which cannot be decided among themselves. Now, in a case of this kind, provided it be an affair of importance, it is expedient for them to apply themselves to other churches, to give their advice by their pastors and elders. If it be some corruption in doctrine which has insinuated itself into the church, they may desire to know the sense of others about it ; still reserving to themselves a judgment of discretion, without reckoning their decrees infallible. Or if it be a matter of conduct, which, through the perverseness of some, and the ignorance of others, may be of pernicious tendency if suitable advice be not given ; then advice ought to be desired and complied with, so far as it appears to be agreeable to the mind of Christ. Such a course is not only allowable, but very expedient. I have nothing to say as to the number of persons to whom the matter may be referred. A multitude of counsellors may sometimes be mistaken, when a smaller number have given better advice. Nor have I any thing to allege in defence of ecumenical councils ; much less such as have been convened by the usurped power of the bishop of Rome. We are speaking of a particular church under some difficulties, desiring the advice of as many as they think meet to refer the matter to. Or if a Christian magistrate demands the advice of the pastors or elders of churches in his dominions, in those religious affairs which are subservient to his government, they ought to obey him. These things are altogether unexceptionable. But when ministers give vent to their own passions, and pretend to give a sanction to doctrines which are unscriptural ; or when they annex anathemas to their decrees, or enforce them by excommunication, or put the civil magistrate on methods of persecution ; they go beyond the rule, and offer prejudice rather than

^c Vid. Greg. Naz. Epist. 42, ad Procop.

do service to the interest of Christ. When, however, they only signify what is their judgment, when it is desired, about some important articles of faith or church-discipline, or some intricate cases of conscience, and endeavour to give conviction rather by arguments than by their authority, not only do they perform a duty, but they are an advantage to the church, as the synod which met at Jerusalem was to the church at Antioch.^d

Having thus considered the office of a pastor, it might be expected that we should consider that of a teacher. This many think to be a distinct officer in the church; as the apostle says, 'He gave some pastors and teachers.'^e Many who treat on this matter, while they suppose a teacher to be a distinct officer from a pastor, yet, when they call him a teaching elder, and allow him to have a part of the government of the church, as well as to be employed in the work of preaching, use a method of explaining the nature of his office which supposes it to differ little or nothing from that of a pastor, except in name. They may say that the difference consists in the pastor being superior in honour and degree to a teacher, and may make the latter no more than a provisionary officer in the church, appointed to perform what properly belongs to the pastor, when he is absent or indisposed, or when, for any other reason, he desires him to officiate for him. But I cannot see reason to conclude that this is the meaning of the word 'teacher,' as mentioned by the apostle. Hence, while they plead for its being a distinct office in the church, and, at the same time, explain it in such a way, there seems to be little else but a distinction without a difference. Others think that it was, indeed, a distinct office, but that a teacher was called, by the church, to some branches of teaching which the pastor could not well attend to, and that he is of the class who were styled by the primitive church, 'catechists.' This opinion deserves our consideration. We read, in the early ages of the church, of persons who had this office and character. Their work was such as needed, as much as any other, those gifts which our blessed Saviour was pleased to bestow on men, for the propagating of his interest in the world. For whether they preached publicly or not, as the pastor was called to do, their business was to instruct not only the catechumens who were disposed to embrace the Christian doctrine, but all who were willing to be taught by them. For this end there were public schools erected, which were under the direction, care, and countenance of the church. In these the method of instruction was, to explain the scriptures, and, in public and set disputations, to defend the Christian religion against those who opposed it. By these means many were converted to the Christian faith from among the heathen; and others, who were initiated in it, were thereby as well as by public preaching, established and confirmed in it, and, in consequence, qualified for church communion, and then baptized and joined to the church. We read in the writings of the Fathers and church historians, of several who performed this office with very great reputation and usefulness.^f And it is thought by some to have been not only agreeable to the practice of the church in the apostle's days, but derived from it; and though it is not so plainly mentioned in scripture as some other offices are, yet that the apostle refers to it, when he says, 'Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth,'^g that is, 'Let him that is catechized communicate to the catechist.'^h But this is, at best, but a probable sense of the word; and therefore not sufficient of itself to give ground to conclude that the apostle means this office when he speaks of teachers as distinct officers from pastors. Though, doubtless, the practice of the church, as above-mentioned, in appointing such officers, was commendable; yet it does not fully appear that this is what the apostle intends. I will not, however, deny it to be a probable con-

^d Acts xv. 31—33.

^e Eph. iv. 11.

^f Near the latter end of the second century, Pantænus was a celebrated catechist, in the school supported by the church at Alexandria; and Clemens Alexandrinus was first his scholar, and afterwards succeeded him in the work of a teacher; and Origen was Clement's scholar, and was afterwards employed in the same work in that school. In the fourth century, Athanasius, who strenuously defended the faith, in the council of Nice, against Arius, had his education in the same school; and Didymus, who flourished about the middle of that century, was a catechist in it, and Jerome and Rufinus were his scholars.

^g Gal. vi. 6.

^h So the vulgar Latin translation renders the word *Κατηχουντι*, 'Ei qui se Catechizat.'

jecture, and I should acquiesce in it, rather than in any other sense of the text which I have hitherto met with, did I not think that the words 'pastors and teachers' might be as well, if not better, understood, as signifying one and the same office. I would rather, therefore, understand them as Jerome and Augustin do,ⁱ and paraphrase them thus: 'He gave some pastors, namely, teachers, or pastors that are teachers or engaged in preaching the gospel, which is the principal branch of their office.' What gives me farther ground to understand the words in this sense, is, that the apostle, when he enumerates the officers of a church elsewhere, speaks of teachers without any mention of pastors: 'God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers.'^k Here no mention is made of pastors, they being included in the word 'teachers.' This is agreeable to what we observed elsewhere;^l and it is all we shall add on this Head.

The next officer in the church is a deacon. His work is described as 'serving tables,'^m that is, the Lord's Table, by providing what is necessary for the Lord's Supper, and assisting in the distribution of the elements. He is also to supply the poor with necessaries, and to take care that the minister may be maintained and other expenses defrayed. In order to his attending to his work, he is to receive the contributions raised by the church for the purposes mentioned. The office, therefore, is properly secular, though necessary and useful, as subservient to others which are of a spiritual nature. The apostle gives an account of the qualifications of those who are to engage in it,ⁿ and, in doing so, he speaks of deacons as persons of an unblemished character, of great gravity and sobriety, and of other endowments which may render them faithful in the discharge of their trust, and exemplary and useful in their station. In the first age of the church after the apostles' days, when it was under persecution, it was the deacon's work to visit and give necessary relief to the martyrs and confessors. But we do not find that they performed any branches of service besides this, and those above-mentioned. Tertullian, indeed, speaks of them, in his time, as being permitted to baptize in the absence of bishops and presbyters;^o in doing which, they went beyond the scripture rule. Afterwards, they preached; and this practice has been defended to this day, by all who plead for diocesan episcopacy. But the arguments they bring for it, from scripture, are not sufficiently conclusive. They say, that Stephen and Philip, who were the first deacons, preached; but this they did as evangelists, not as deacons. It is pleaded, too, that deacons are required to be 'apt to teach';^p but the meaning of this is, that they must be fit to edify those, by their instructions, whom they relieve, in giving them a part of the church's contributions, that, by their conversation, they may do good to their souls, as well as, by what they give them, to their bodies. Its being farther said, that 'they who have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith,'^q does not sufficiently prove, as many ancient and modern writers suppose, that they are qualified for the office of presbyters; for there is no affinity between the two offices, and one cannot, properly speaking, be a qualification for the other. The 'good degree' is, probably, to be understood of their having great honour in the church, as persons eminently useful to it; and 'great boldness in the faith,' is not boldness in preaching the gospel, but resolution and steadfastness in adhering to the faith,—and, in their proper station, defending it, and being ready, when called, to suffer for it. We have thus considered the government of the church, and the officers whom Christ has appointed in it.

VI. The last thing to be considered, is the privileges of the visible church, par-

ⁱ Vid. Hieron. in Eph. iv. 11. Non ait alios Pastores, et alios magistros; sed alios Pastores, et magistros, ut qui Pastor est, esse debeat et magister, nec in Ecclesiis Pastoris sibi nomen assumere, nisi posset docere quos pascit; et Aug. Epist. 59. Pastores et Doctores eosdem puto esse, ut non alios Pastores alios Doctores intelligamus, sed ideo cum prædixisset Pastores subjunxisse Doctores ut intelligerent Pastores ad officium suum pertinere doctrinam.

^k 1 Cor. xii. 28.

^l The particle *καί* seems to be exegetical, and ought to be rendered *even*. See the note in vol. i. p. 184. The words are *ἔδωκε τοὺς ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους*.

^m Acts vi. 2.

ⁿ 1 Tim. iii. 1—11.

^o Vid. Tertull. de Bapt. Baptizandi habet jus

^p Episcopus, doctrinæ Presbyteri et Diaconi.

p 1 Tim. iii. 2.

^q Verse 13.

ticularly as its members are said to be under God's special care and government, and, in consequence, have safe protection and preservation, whatever opposition they may meet with from their enemies, and also enjoy communion of saints, and the ordinary means of salvation.

1. We shall consider the church as under the care of Christ. This is the result of his propriety in them, and his having undertaken to do for them, as Mediator, all things which are necessary to their salvation. This care, extended towards them, is called special, and so differs from that which is expressed in the methods of his common providence in the world, and confers many distinct and superior privileges. There are several metaphorical expressions used in scripture, to denote Christ's care of his church, and the particular relation he stands in to it. Thus he is described as their 'Shepherd,' performing those things for them which such a relation imports,^r namely, his giving them, in a spiritual sense, rest and safety, gathering, leading, and defending them. And as their Shepherd he does more for his people than the shepherd who, being faithful to his trust, hazards his life; for Christ is expressly said to 'give his life for his sheep.'^s Moreover, his care of his church is set forth by his standing in the relation of a 'Father' to them; which argues his tender and compassionate concern for their welfare, as well as safety.^t Now, his care extended to his church, consists in his separating them from the world, and, as it were, gathering them out of it, or out of that part of it which 'lieth in wickedness.' 'The whole world,' says the apostle, 'lieth in wickedness,'^u or, as the word may be rendered, 'in the wicked one;' on which account it is called Satan's kingdom. Christ gives his people restraining grace, brings them under conviction of sin, and humbles them for it; and, by the preaching of the gospel, not only informs them of the way of salvation, but brings them into it. Again, he raises up and animates some amongst them for extraordinary service and usefulness in their station, adorning them with those graces whereby their conversation is exemplary, and they are made to shine as lights in the world. Not only in some particular instances, but by a constant succession, he fills up the places of those who are removed to a better world, with others who are added to the church daily, such as shall be saved. Further, his care of his people is extended by fatherly correction, to prevent their ruin and apostacy; which, as the apostle says, is a manifestation of his 'love' to them.^x He also keeps them from and 'in the hour of temptation,'^y 'bruises Satan under their feet,'^z and supports them under and fortifies them against the many difficulties, reproaches, and persecutions they are exposed to in this world; as Moses says, in the blessing of Asher, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be; the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'^a

2. The visible church is under Christ's special government. It is a part of his glory, as Mediator, that he is its supreme Head and Lord. This cannot but redound to the advantage of his subjects; who profess subjection to him, not only as their duty, but as their peculiar glory, they being thereby distinguished from the world, and entitled to his special regard. As their King, he gives them laws by which they are visibly governed; so that they are not destitute of a rule of government, any more than of a rule of faith. Their peace, order, edification, and salvation, are, in consequence, promoted. And all the advantages which they receive from the wisdom and conduct of pastors or other officers, whom he has appointed to go in and out before them, 'to feed them with knowledge and understanding,'^b 'to watch for their souls,'^c are Christ's gifts, and therefore privileges which the church enjoys as under his government. Again, he protects and preserves them, notwithstanding the opposition of all their enemies; so that whatever attempts have been hitherto made to extirpate or ruin them, have been ineffectual. The church has weathered many a tempest, and has enjoyed safety, as well as various marks of the divine honour and favour, under all the persecutions to which it has been exposed; so that, according to our Saviour's prediction, 'the

r Psal. xxiii. 1, 2; lxxx. 1; Isa. xl. 11; Jer. xxxi. 10. s John x. 11. t Deut. xxxii. 7;
 Psal. ciii. 13; Isa. lxiii. 16; Jer. xxxi. 9. u 1 John v. 19. x Heb. xii. 6, 7.
 y Rev. iii. 10. z Rom. xvi. 22. a Deut. xxxiii. 25, 27. b Jer. iii. 15.
 c Heb. xiii. 17.

gates of hell have not prevailed against it,'^d and all these afflictive dispensations of providence are overruled for promoting his own glory and their spiritual advantage.

3. Another privilege, which the church enjoys, is communion of saints. Communion is the consequence of union. Hence, as they are united together as visible saints, they enjoy that communion which is the result. The apostle speaks of a twofold fellowship which the church enjoys, their attaining of which he reckoned the great end and design of his ministry: 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'^e The former is included in church-communion; the latter is an honour which God is pleased sometimes to confer on those who are brought into this relation. It is what all are to hope for, though none but they who are Christ's subjects by faith are made partakers of it. The communion of saints, however, is in itself a great privilege, inasmuch as the common profession which they make of subjection to Christ, and the hope of the gospel with which they are favoured, are a strong motive and inducement to holiness. Nor is it the smallest part of the advantage arising hence, that they are interested in the prayers of all the faithful which are daily put up to God for those blessings on all his churches which may tend to their edification and salvation. As to the members of particular churches who have communion with one another, there is a great advantage arising from mutual conversation about divine things, and the endeavours which they are obliged to use, 'to build up themselves in their holy faith,'^f and 'to consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, but exhorting one another,'^g and from the obligations they are under to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,'^h and to express sympathy and compassion for one another under the various afflictions and trials to which they are exposed. Another privilege which they are made partakers of, is, that they have communion with one another in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; in which they hope for and enjoy communion with him whose death is showed forth, and in which the benefits of his death are applied to those who believe.

4. The church is farther said to enjoy the ordinary means of salvation, and the offers of grace to all its members, in the ministry of the gospel. This is what we are to understand by 'the word preached and prayer.' These are called the ordinary means of salvation, as distinguished from the powerful influences of the Spirit; which are the internal and efficacious means of grace, producing such effects as infer the right which those who enjoy them have to eternal life. These ordinary means of grace the church is said to partake of. It is for their sake that the gospel is continued to be preached; and a public testimony to the truth of it is given by them to the world. Accordingly, in the preaching of it, Christ is offered to sinners; and grace is given whereby the church is increased and built up by the addition to it of those who are taken out of the world, as God makes these ordinances effectual to answer that end. The duty of waiting on him in the preaching of the gospel is ours; the success of the preaching is entirely owing to the divine blessing attending it. These are the privileges which the visible church enjoys. We might have proceeded to consider those which the members of the invisible church are made partakers of, namely, union and communion with Christ in grace and glory; but these are particularly insisted on in some following Answers.

d Matt. xvi. 18.

e 1 John i. 3.

f Jude 20.

g Heb. x. 24, 25.

h Gal. vi.

[NOTE A. *Various Significations of the word 'Church.'*—Dr. Ridgeley formally states the senses of the word 'church.' The first of these is the derivational meaning of the word, and do not affect the discussion of any question in ecclesiastical economy. The second is a meaning which he successfully shows to be unsanctioned in scripture. The third alone has connexion with the doctrines he discusses; and is, he says, 'the sense in which we are to understand the word in discussing these Answers.' Here, surely, is great simplicity and uniqueness of definition.—one sense of the word church to stand in room of those twelve or twenty senses which are imposed on it in the lucubrations of many theological writers! 'The word church in scripture, is, for the most part, if not always, taken for an assembly of Christians met together for religious worship, according to the rules which Christ has given for their direction.' Does Dr. Ridgeley, then, adhere to this simple and only definition? Not at all. He either totally forgets it, and substitutes definition

after definition as occasion suits him; or, in utter inconsistency with its terms, he makes it include his notion of 'the visible church,' 'the invisible church,' 'the church militant,' and 'the church triumphant,' as well as other modified senses of the word. It hence is as necessary as if he had offered no definition whatever, to attempt to show what the scriptural meaning or rather meanings of the word are.

Apart from the use of the word church in reference to the former dispensation—an use of it which would probably establish two peculiar meanings, or meanings distinct from its use in reference to the economy of redemption or the Christian dispensation, but meanings which lie dormant with the temporary or prefigurative and abolished state of things to which they applied—it appears to be employed, in the New Testament, in only two senses. Some scope must be allowed, indeed, for greater or less latitude of signification. I speak not of degrees of meaning, but of distinct kinds or generic varieties of meaning; and, in opposition to the theory which makes it mean a cluster of Christian congregations, the aggregate body of congregations in a province or kingdom, the office-bearers of a congregation, a court or assembly of ecclesiastical rulers, a body of governors or pastors, the whole baptized population of a state, the aggregate multitude of professing Christians in the world, or any delegated or ruling representative power over the Christian faith and discipline, I am inclined to state that, as appears to me, it means only the aggregate body of the redeemed, or a single congregation, no matter how small, of professing Christians.

1. The word church means the aggregate body of the redeemed in such passages as the following:—'And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;' 'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church;' 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church,' Col. i. 18; Eph. i. 22; v. 25, 32. That 'the church,' in these and similar passages, means simply and collectively the redeemed, cannot admit of doubt. Now, by a synecdoche—a figure of speech very frequently used by the inspired writers, by which a part is taken for the whole—it appears, in some other passages, to mean either the redeemed in their successive generations on earth, or those of them who are cotemporary or who communicate in concurrent circumstances. But I would no more call this a distinct sense of the word church, than I would say that the word atonement has one meaning when it is expressed by the phrase 'Christ was made under the law,' or 'he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,' and another meaning when it is expressed by the phrase 'he died for us,' or he 'became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' The figure of a part for the whole affects not the generic nature or the distinctiveness of a meaning, but only its extent or degree. The multitude of the redeemed are so completely one body, that whatever is affirmed of any part of it may well be described by epithets, or designated by an appellative, proper to the whole. Such texts, then, as these,—'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;' 'And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets,' (Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. xii. 28.) are not exceptions to the definition of 'the church' as meaning the aggregate body of the redeemed. At all events, they are far from sanctioning any one of the many varied meanings which are contended for by most writers on ecclesiastical economy.

2. The word 'church' means, in a large number of passages, a single congregation of professing Christians. Two or three instances will sufficiently serve for illustration. 'Into the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;' 'And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea;' 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,' 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. iv. 16; Rev. ii. 7. The current and emphatic manner in which this sense of the word occurs, to the exclusion of such senses as make it mean a number of neighbouring congregations, or the congregations of any district, province, or state, remarkably appears in the seemingly uniform use of the plural 'churches' whenever more congregations than one are mentioned. The following passages may be consulted in illustration, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 19; 2 Cor. viii. 1; Gal. i. 22; Rev. i. 4, 11, 20; ii. 7, 11, 17, 19, 23; Acts ix. 31; xv. 41; xvi. 5; Rom. xvi. 4, 16; 1 Cor. vii. 17; xi. 16; xiv. 33, 34; 2 Cor. viii. 19, 23; xi. 8, 28; xii. 13; 1 Thess. ii. 14; 2 Thess. i. 4.

Some writers contend that the word designates two or more congregations in the same city in the phrases 'the church at Ephesus' and 'the church at Jerusalem;' and the reason they assign for their opinion is, that at Ephesus there appear to have been several pastors, and at Jerusalem more church-members than could assemble in one place of meeting. A plurality of pastors, however, is no evidence of a plurality of congregations. Most of the Christian congregations during the first, second, and third centuries—at least most if not all in large towns—appear, on unquestionable testimony, to have had each a college of pastors. As to the church at Jerusalem, I have no inclination to make it seem less numerous, than the highest calculations will warrant; but, whatever were its numbers, it clearly, so long as we have notices of it in the New Testament, held all its public meetings as a single congregation. We have no hint either of two simultaneous meetings having been held, or of the members having been partitioned into two or more sections; but, on the other hand, we have an account of 'all the multitude,' 'the apostles and elders, with the whole church,' so late as thirteen years after the day of Pentecost, holding their meeting in one place, Acts xv. 12, 22. A very large proportion of the converts or original members of the church at Jerusalem, it must be remembered, were strangers or temporary visitors from almost every province of the Roman empire (Acts ii. 7—11.); and they must be supposed, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to have soon returned to their respective homes, there to live in a dispersed condition as 'the salt of the earth.' Besides, however numerous the

resident members of the church were, they had scarcely tasted the enjoyments of church-fellowship when 'they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles,' Acts viii. 1. No stronger a presumption, perhaps, against a theoretic possibility of any church being able to meet and to observe Christian ordinances in one place, could be urged than the events of the church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. 'They that gladly received the word,' we are told, 'were baptized; and the same day there were added about three thousand souls,' Acts ii. 41. Now, is it conceivable, a theorist might exclaim, that a church could meet in company with so enormous a multitude that three thousand of the latter should at a single meeting be converted? Is it conceivable that, in one place of assembly, three thousand persons could be baptized—that a church of more than this number of persons could, in one place, hold stated meetings and observe Christian ordinances? Yes, says the narrative, not only is it possible, but it was the fact; for apart from the circumstance that the conversion and the baptism of the three thousand occurred at the church's public meeting, 'the church,' after the three thousand were added to them, and while constantly receiving fresh accessions, 'continued daily with one accord in the temple,' Acts ii. 46. See also chap. iv. 23, 24, 31, 32; v. 41, 42. The instances of Ephesus and Jerusalem, then, are no exceptions to the current and remarkably frequent use of the word 'church' to designate a single Christian congregation.

Another class of theological writers allege that the word 'church' bears two meanings distinct from any we have yet mentioned. One of these is, a Christian congregation as actually assembled. They distinguish this sense of the word from a Christian congregation simply as such, and found particularly on the passage, 'It is a shame for women to speak in the church;' (1 Cor. xiv. 35.) remarking that if 'church' be not here understood as something distinct from a congregation, female church-members are virtually prohibited from ever speaking. But is it not clear that 'in the church' means in the church *as such*? If by church were meant church-fellowship, or the relation of church-membership, women might, indeed, be said to lie under an obligation of perpetual silence. But what is said is, 'It is a shame for women to speak *in the church*,'—not in the condition of church-members, not in the family circle, not in the presence of a few fellow-members, but either in the congregation as assembled or in any manner involving address to all its members. The writers to whom I allude seem thus to fall into a non-sequitur when they argue for the distinctness of a church as such, and of a church as assembled. Nor do they reason better in support of their other sense of the word,—that it means a family of believers together with any Christians statedly meeting with them for worship. This meaning they found on the phrase which occurs in three texts, in reference to three distinct bodies, 'the church which is in their house,' Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15; Philem. 2. But who, except a person habituated to make distinctions almost for the sake of making them, can see any difference between a church in a private house and a church in a vast area like that of the temple at Jerusalem, except that the one was very small and the other very large? Various principalities on the continent of Europe do not number half a million of subjects, while the principality of China is said to number upwards of three hundred millions; are the former, on account of their comparative littleness, not really sovereign states?

The two senses, then, of the word church—that it means the aggregate body of the redeemed, and that it means a single congregation of Christians—appear, so far as we have examined the subject, to be the only ones sanctioned in reference to the Christian dispensation.—ED.]

[NOTE B. *The Invisible Church*.—Not one scripture is quoted as even remotely sanctioning the use of the word 'church' in the sense of 'the invisible church.' Nor, in fact, are we told or helped to conceive what 'the invisible church,' as distinct from the church in the sense of the aggregate body of the redeemed, is. So far as appears from either definition or evidence, the thing talked about eludes not more completely the sense of *sight*, than every other sense, and the understanding to boot. Dr. Ridgeley speaks of it, under three particulars, as elect and subject to Christ, as only in the progress of being gathered to its living Head, and as 'hid with Christ in God.' But so far as these ideas are correlative with any meaning of the word church, they describe simply the general body of the saved, or denote some features by which it is characterized. If, on such grounds, or on account of distinguishing phases in the condition or history of the redeemed, we are to have the distinction of 'the church invisible,' we not only may, with Dr. Ridgeley, have the further distinctions of 'the church militant,' and 'the church triumphant,' but may also have the distinctions of 'the church elect,' 'the church regenerated,' 'the church millennial,' 'the church ante-resurrectional,' 'the church post-resurrectional,' 'the church in sackcloth,' 'the church in royal robes,' 'the church imperfect,' 'the church perfect,' 'the church missionary,' 'the church terrestrial,' 'the church associate with angels.' There is, in fact, no end to distinctions, when the passion for making them usurps the place of simplification and exposition. The scholars of the nineteenth century could probably add tenfold to the long list of them in the writings of the schoolmen of the dark ages, who regarded the making of them as the only creditable achievement in theological pursuit. But modern writers, instead of perpetuating the practice of the schoolmen, are better employed when they discard every distinction not sanctioned by the Bible. The simple fact that the idea of 'the church invisible' has not the countenance of one text of scripture, and is incompetent to throw light on any doctrine of revelation, or any scriptural view of ecclesiastical economy, is a sufficient reason for its being entirely rejected.—ED.]

[NOTE C. *The Holy Catholic Church*.—The ancient Christians held no such opinion respecting 'the church' as seems indicated in what is popularly but erroneously termed 'the Apostles' Creed.' Neither the apostolic Christians, as distinguished from early errorists, nor the senior Christian community, as distinguished from the first dissenters, were called 'the Catholic church.' Those summaries of the primitive faith which are preserved in the extant writings of the three earliest centuries, are free from such phraseology, on the subject of 'the church,' as figures in some creeds of later periods. One of them given by Origen, says merely, that "the true faith is very clearly preached in all the churches;" another, given by Cyprian, speaks of "the remission of sins, and life

everlasting, through the holy church;" and all the others are silent as to either 'the church' or 'churches.' The general writings of the period pursue a similar course. Tertullian, and even earlier authors, made frequent use, indeed, of the word 'church;' yet they employed it in no such exclusive sense as was attached to it in the fourth and following centuries; but identified it chiefly with 'the body of Christ,' or with the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit. "Where the church is," says Irenæus, "there is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and every grace." "The Spirit," says Tertullian, "gathers together that church which the Lord hath established; and hence any number of persons who may have jointly adopted this faith, are esteemed a church by its author, who set it apart. The church, therefore, will indeed give remissions; but the church is the Spirit acting through the spiritual man; the church is not a number of bishops (ministers)."

Early in the third century undue importance began to be attached to the administering and removing of church censures. Sins against the brethren came to be in a degree undistinguished from sins against God; or, more properly, sins as disqualifying for Christian fellowship, came to be undistinguished from sins as affecting the condition of the soul. The province of the churches to judge of the evidences of Christian character, began gradually to be viewed as a province to decide on the state of a professing Christian's heart. All the early churches justly regarded their discipline as the use of 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' or as the exercise of the power of 'binding and loosing,' which was committed to the apostles. But what, in the two earliest centuries, was viewed as admission to mere fraternal confidence, began, in the third, to be viewed as in a degree the imparting of a character, or the deciding of a moral condition. What chiefly, and perhaps solely, occasioned this change, was the gradual usurpation by the pastors or 'bishops' of undue ecclesiastical power. When the ecclesiastics of the third century set up pretensions to a loftier domination than comported with the simplicity of more primitive times, they claimed for their authority every possible kind of importance, and naturally promulged new and strange doctrines, such as might impress the people with awe, respecting the nature and consequences of their acts of discipline. To admit or to excommunicate members, was hence represented as 'a binding' or 'a loosing' in some mysterious or peculiarly solemn sense,—'a binding' or 'a loosing' of such a character, as to involve more or less the highest interests of the soul. This error, which was destined to assume, in the course of a few centuries, the settled form of the Romish doctrine of absolution from all sins by ordained priests, had acquired sufficient distinctness of outline to be perceptible, even in the days of Tertullian; and as first mooted, or as existing in a shadowy and unacknowledged state, it is exactly what that primitive writer denounces in the quotation which closed our last paragraph: "The church will, indeed, give remissions; but the church is the Spirit acting through the spiritual man; the church is not a number of bishops." Tertullian's doctrine, promulged during the first years of the third century, was extensively undermined between the years 248 and 260,—a period which was distinguished by alike the pious labours and the injurious influences of the celebrated Cyprian. That generally excellent man was the worst innovator, whom the churches had hitherto encountered, on the rights and liberties of the Christian people; and, without intending or foreseeing so painful a result, he did more than many of his predecessors united, to convert the primitive form of church order into an incipient system of unscriptural domination.

Now, excepting one given by Origen which talks simply of 'the preaching of truth in the churches,' that given by Cyprian is the only one of the primitive summaries of faith, which affords even a remote sanction to the clause in the apostles' creed: 'The Holy Catholic Church.' Yet even Cyprian says nothing respecting 'the Catholic church,' and he speaks of 'the Holy church,' not as a distinct article of belief, but as connected with 'remission of sins and life eternal.' He identifies—not in his creed, indeed, but in his accompanying writings—first, 'the church' with the church's bishops, and next, the bishops' acts of discipline with some loose or floating ideas of absolution from sin or of infliction of punishment as affecting the permanent condition of the soul. He no doubt represents faithfully the belief which prevailed at the period, especially among his own immediate people; yet he states it as a belief simply in the doctrine of 'remission of sins *through the holy church*;' and he leaves us to infer, what is rendered abundantly certain by even later records than his writings, that all such notions of 'the Holy Catholic Church' as prevailed from near the commencement of the fourth century, generally till the epoch of the Reformation, and in a degree till the present time, were unknown and unthought of at the period when he wrote.

We must thus look to later documents than the primitive summaries of faith, in order to find sanction for the phrase, 'the Holy Catholic Church.' The earliest creed in which it appears is *the Nicene*. No writer mentions any thing of 'the church' as an article of belief, or says any thing like 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' before Alexander bishop of Alexandria; and even he is known or thought to have written so, only as he is reported in the ecclesiastical history of Theodoret, who wrote about the year 430. Alexander himself was the cotemporary of the council of Nice, and was a chief party in bringing before it both the Arians and the orthodox sect of Miletians; and, as represented by Theodoret, he speaks of 'the one only Catholic and apostolic church,' in the course of a professed commentary on the enactments of Nice. After him, except as existing in the Nicene creed, there is no further trace of the clause till the time of Epiphanius, who wrote about the year 390. This writer, as well as several cotemporary or immediately subsequent Greek authors, record it as begun to be incorporated, among the eastern churches, with copies of the apostles' creed. Yet, even at the late date of the close of the fourth century, when this clause began to be copied from the Nicene creed into the apostles', it read for a season in all copies of the latter, not 'the Holy Catholic Church,' but simply 'the Holy Church.' Rufinus, who was cotemporary with Epiphanius, remarks,—“We do not say 'we believe in the Holy Church,' but 'we believe the Holy Church,' not as in God, but as a church congregated by God;” and Augustine, writing about the year 410, and expounding the apostles' creed, says, “We believe the Holy Church, to wit, the

Catholic one," clearly adding the word 'catholic' as a term expository of the phrase, 'the Holy Church,' which was all his copy of the creed contained.

This phrase, then, 'the Holy Catholic Church,' belongs, in all its authority and parts, to the creed of Nice, and in no degree or respect whatever to the apostles' creed, except as carried into it from the other toward the end of the fourth century, and during the progress of the fifth. If we would know either its history or its intended meaning, we must look solely to the proceedings of the Nicene council. In the creed of that assembly, it reads, 'I believe one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church.' This is its legitimate shape, that which it originally possessed, and the only one in which it ought ever to have appeared. Let the clause retain this form, and let a glance be given at the occasion and the objects of convoking the council of Nice, and all its intended meaning, as well as its utter want of sanction in the consent of the three earliest centuries, will be distinctly understood. The Nicene council was summoned by Constantine the Great, to settle existing differences among the various parties and sects of the professing Christians. It dealt, in the first instance and chiefly, with the Arians, who were a heterodox party in the bosom of the general communion; and next to them, it dealt most prominently with the Novatians and the Miletians, who were two large sects of orthodox dissenters, or according to the language of the period, orthodox 'schismatics.' One of its twenty canons is occupied wholly with the affairs of the Novatians. Now, as regarded doctrine, it declared—fitly enough—that the Arians were not believers in Christ's true gospel; and as regarded communion, it declared—most unfitly—that the Novatians and the Miletians were not members of Christ's true church; or what amounted to the same thing, it enacted that the Arians should not be treated as Christian brethren, because they were 'heretics,' and that the Novatians and Miletians, except on condition of their 'conforming,' should not be treated as such, because they were 'schismatics.' What the council decreed against error was summed up in the numerous clauses of their creed which assert the true Deity of Christ; and what they decreed against the orthodox sects was summed up in the words, 'the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church.' Their conduct virtually amounted to the foreshadowing, though unwittingly, of those baneful claims which have, for so many centuries, been pleaded by the Church of Rome. The words 'Holy Catholic Church,' if interpreted either by the light of history, the concurrent usage of early authors, or the original intention of the council of Nice, mean little else than that the large sect protected and endowed by the Christian Roman Emperors, and afterwards presided over by 'the patriarchs' of Rome, is the one only church built on the apostles or acknowledged by Christ, whilst the holiest and most orthodox communities who dissented from it, in common with such egregious errorists as the Valentinians, the Basilidians, and the Carpocratians, lie under the displeasure of the great King of the Christian dispensation. We might quote several early writers on the clause to show that this view of its original meaning is correct; but we shall content ourselves with one quotation from Augustine: "We believe the Holy Church, to wit, the Catholic one; for heretics and schismatics call their congregations churches; but heretics, by false opinions concerning God, violate the faith; and schismatics, by unjust separations, depart from brotherly love, although they believe what we believe. Wherefore a heretic doth not belong to the catholic church, because she loves God; nor a schismatic, because she loves her neighbour."

So far, then, as the apostles' creed represents the Christian sentiments of the three earliest centuries, the clause, 'the Holy Catholic Church,' must be expunged; and so far as it represents the sentiments of later ages, that clause must be treated as at war with the doctrines of the Bible, and as a defence of the corruptions which pioneered the papacy. The best possible apology which can be made for it is, that, viewed apart from its history, it absolutely wants meaning. 'To believe a church,' in any such sense as to believe a doctrine, such as 'the resurrection of the body,' or 'the life everlasting,' is manifestly absurd; and 'to believe in a church,' would be to make erring mortals the guides of unerring faith, or to invest them with an authority over the conscience which should be inconsistent with the supreme claims of revelation. The scriptures invite us to 'believe' only in doctrines revealed; and they invite us to 'believe in' only the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ's churches upon earth are simply communities of 'saints,' 'faithful men,' 'called,' 'brethren'; they are bodies of believers who must 'bear one another's burdens,' and 'each esteem others better than himself'—'fed' and 'taught' by ministers who are not 'lords over them, but helpers of their joy'—and bound to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free.'—ED.]

[NOTE D. *The Visible Church*.—Used as a collective term to denote all Christian congregations, or the aggregate body of professing Christians, the word 'church' is convenient and expressive, and can hardly, even by a fastidious thinker, be regarded as liable to exception. This sense of it, however, must not, I think, be exhibited as having the sanction of scripture; nor must it be allowed to have any influence or place in questions of ecclesiastical economy. To speak of the church in a general way as expressive of the aggregate body of professing Christians, is only a convenient usage, which saves a writer from periphrases, or from the cacophonous use of such phrases as 'the professing Christian churches of the world,' 'the professedly Christian population of the earth;' but to speak of 'the church' in the technical and distinctive manner intended by the designation 'the visible church,' is to introduce interminable confusion into our ideas of ecclesiastical economy, and afford an inlet and a sanction to innumerable abuses in the practice of discipline and the observance of ordinances. The phrase 'visible church,' if viewed in the light of history, or even in that of present usage, is a perfect polyglott of significations,—sometimes exhibiting six or eight languages in a row. Even an alleged part of 'the visible church'—'the national church' of any given country—is not unfrequently understood in a variety of conflicting senses. At one time it means all the inhabitants of the soil; at another, all the baptized inhabitants; at another, all the baptized who have received baptism in the established communion; at another, all the Christian communicants of the country; at another, all the communicants of the established sect; at another, all the church judicatories of the country; at another, the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory of the establishment

co-operating with the state. In all these senses, and perhaps in some others, the phrase 'the church of —,' as designative of the sect established by law in a country, is often understood. Yet this phrase, with all its diversity of meanings, designates only *a part* of what is meant to be expressed by the phrase, 'the visible church.' How perplexingly confused, then, how surpassingly indefinite, how exquisitely adapted to the purposes of subterfuge and corruption, must the latter phrase be! The grossest outrages on Christian liberty, the most latitudinarian or licentious invasions on scriptural views of ecclesiastical discipline, the wildest efforts to extend the Christian name to almost any thing in faith and almost every thing in morals, the most audacious courses of antichristian usurpation and tyranny, have all careered over the phrase 'visible church' as a field of summer dust, a wilderness of impalpable sand, throwing up such clouds as have at once concealed their own movements and blinded the eyes of onlookers or pursuers.

The only definition of 'the visible church' which can at all bear examination, is that which makes it a collective name for all single Christian congregations, or a designation of the aggregate body of professing Christians. This seems to be, with some deviations, the sense attached to it throughout Dr. Ridgeley's remarks; it is, at all events, the sense in which he understands it when he claims for it a scriptural sanction. As far, then, as he is concerned, the only question is, whether the use of the word 'church,' thus understood, is simply a matter of convenience, or whether it possesses sacred authority, and, in consequence, ought to influence our views of ecclesiastical economy?

Now, Dr. Ridgeley does appear to me to fail in his attempt to adduce scriptural proof. As to the passage, 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles; secondarily prophets,' &c., (1 Cor. xii. 28.) it would be hard to show that 'the church' of which it speaks is the aggregate body of Christian congregations coterminously existing at any period on the earth. Just to that church, to those persons, to that elected multitude whom Christ bought with his blood, has God given, as they pass in their successive generations through the world, all those ordinances, whether the ministry of apostles, or the ministry of prophets, or the ministry of evangelists, or the ministry of pastors and teachers, which are for 'the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' Eph. iv. 11—13. The apostles, in particular—on the peculiarity of whose office Dr. Ridgeley appears wholly to rest his argument—were not given to the aggregate body of single congregations in the primitive age, nor to the aggregate body of professing Christians in any one period of the world's history, but to 'the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven,' or to that entire church over whom their inspired writings will have an everlasting influence. Hence, the wall of the new Jerusalem, the emblem of the entire body of the saved in a state of celestial glorification, is said to have 'twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb,' Rev. xxi. 14. Hence, too, the united multitude of Jewish and Gentile believers—all who have 'access by one Spirit to the Father'—are said to be 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,' Eph. ii. 20, 21.

As to the passages which speak of Paul's persecuting 'the church,' they may not be of so easy explanation. If, however, any one should assert that by 'the church' of which they speak is to be understood only the church at Jerusalem, the obligation to prove the opposite would lie with persons who adopt Dr. Ridgeley's exposition. For before it can be alleged that the word is an aggregate designation of several churches or congregations, proof must be furnished that such churches existed at the time to which the passages refer. Now, where is the proof that, at the period of Paul's being a persecutor, there had been formed any other stated congregation than that at Jerusalem? Paul, it is to be remembered, was converted in the year 33; and he is first noticed as a persecutor only in the previous year, when, in consequence apparently of his proceedings, the church at Jerusalem 'were all scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria.' His persecution is noticed in the book of Acts seemingly in connexion with Jerusalem only, and with his purpose to make inquisition in Damascus. He appears to have remained at Jerusalem till 'he went to the high priest; and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues.' He speaks, indeed, of 'the churches of Judea;' but he not only says that 'he was unknown by face to them,' but makes mention of them as coterminous with his 'going into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,' Gal. i. 21, 22. Now, as we learn from comparing Gal. i. 17, 18. with Acts ix. 22—30, he did not go into 'Syria and Cilicia,' or toward 'Cæsarea and Tarsus,' till *at least three years*—possibly not till four or five or six—*after his conversion*. Is it not probable, then, that 'the churches of Judea' which then existed had sprung out of the labours of the brethren composing the church at Jerusalem who, a little while before his conversion, 'were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria,' and who 'went everywhere preaching the word?' Acts viii. 1, 4. If so, these churches 'bearing that he who persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed,' (Gal. i. 23.) must refer simply to his persecuting persons of their views and character,—persecuting the class of men to which they belonged. Had they existed as churches in the days of his being persecutor, and been subjected, as Dr. Ridgeley's argument assumes, to his persecuting rage, he could hardly have been 'unknown to them by face.' At whatever time these churches were planted, they were, so late as at least three years after his conversion, unacquainted with his person, and had only *heard* of his character and history.

Two things may seem strange in the supposition I have made,—that, so late as the date of Paul's conversion, or in the fourth year after the day of Pentecost, there was no Christian church except that of Jerusalem; and that, so early after that interval as the date of his going to Syria and Cilicia, churches had sprung up in Judea. But it must be remembered that the apostles, in the commission they received to preach the gospel to the world, were instructed to 'begin at Jerusalem;' (Luke xiv. 47.) and that they appear to have been remarkably slow to commence exertions beyond the

precincts of that city. Peter's visit to Cornelius, for example, did not occur till eleven years after Pentecost, or seven after Paul's conversion. As to churches springing up in Judea between the date of the dispersion of the church of Jerusalem and that of Paul's going to Syria and Cilicia, no event, not expressly narrated, can seem more probable. The interval between the dates was four years; and the number of dispersed brethren employed in preaching must have been very great,—almost multitudinous. During this interval, too, we are expressly told 'Samaria received the word of God,' or for the first time produced any materials for a Christian church, Acts viii. 14. Now, the dispersion which affected Samaria was exactly the event which affected Judea; for the brethren who went everywhere preaching the word were 'scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.' What more probable an inference, then, than that 'the churches of Judea' referred to by Paul were planted during the period immediately succeeding his persecutions?

There is only another point in Dr. Ridgeley's argument, or in the passages adduced by him, which requires notice. Paul says he 'persecuted *the church of God*;' and he here employs a designation which may be thought too emphatic to be applied to the congregation of Jerusalem. But exactly the same designation is elsewhere applied by him to each of several congregations. Thus he inscribes his First Epistle to the Corinthians '*To the church of God which is at Corinth*,' 1 Cor. i. 2. He asks the disorderly communicants of that congregation, in reference to their seemingly contemptuous treatment of the stated public meetings of their brethren, 'Despise ye the church of God?' 1 Cor. xi. 22. He exhorts the elders of Ephesus, in reference to the pastoral duties which they owed to the congregation, to 'feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Acts xx. 28. He asks, in reference to a bishop or pastor's relation to the congregation which he rules, 'If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?' 1 Tim. iii. 5. To apply the designation 'church of God' to a single congregation, is thus a current usage of the apostle's style.

I am far from asserting that the view I have given of the church which Paul persecuted, accords with assured fact. All I would say respecting it is, that it is vindicated by what appears to me respectable evidence; while the view contended for by Dr. Ridgeley is, so far as I know, supported by no evidence whatever. Before it can be asserted that 'the church' which Paul persecuted was what is usually termed 'the visible church,' or even a plurality of Christian congregations, a refutation must be made of the reasons which have been assigned for supposing that it was only the church at Jerusalem, and evidence must be furnished that other churches than the latter existed prior to Paul's conversion. After all, the three texts which speak of Paul's persecuting the church,—texts one in subject, though three in number,—are the only ones out of upwards of one hundred which are seriously claimed in sanction of any of the technical or scholastic meanings attached by systematic writers to the word 'church.' Of thirty-two texts in which the plural 'churches' occurs, none whatever are claimed; and of about seventy in which the singular 'church' occurs, almost all are admitted, and the small remainder are but feebly denied, to exhibit 'the church' either as the aggregate body of the saved, or as a single Christian congregation.—Ed.]

[NOTE E. *Qualification for Church-fellowship*.—"The apostle," says Dr. Ridgeley, "gives a short but very comprehensive description of those who are fit members of a church, when he says, 'We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'" Does it not follow, then, that some evidence of persons possessing this character is requisite for their own sakes, and ought to be demanded by a church before their being admitted to its fellowship? Yet Dr. Ridgeley makes the only qualification for admission to consist in 'a profession,'—a qualification, according to him, so valid and conclusive as to entitle persons to the enjoyment and retention of fellowship till they shall perpetrate conduct which 'gives the lie' to what they profess. No term, perhaps, has been more abused, more indefinite in meaning, more accommodated to all varieties of laxity or severity of discipline, than this word 'profession.' Every body of nominal Christians attaches to it just such a meaning as best accords with its own practical standard of fitness for church-fellowship. The geographical pastor, who admits all persons above a given age and within certain territorial limits, and the austere separatist disciplinarian, who demands acquaintance with not only the elements but the minute lessons of Christian character, equally, according to their own showing, require candidates to make 'a profession.' It is high time that Christian churches should define 'a profession' to be *positive* evidence—such evidence as satisfies the judgment of *faithfulness* and charity—of nothing less and nothing more than a person's being 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.'

The notion of 'the visible church,' as distinguished from 'the invisible,' has worked havoc upon correct notions of Christian fellowship. Pastors without number imagine that they are building up a community which is in some sense a true church of God, and composed of persons in some sense Christians; all the while that, confessedly to themselves, they are including in it but an indifferent proportion of hopeful members of what they are pleased to call 'the invisible church.' "The members of the invisible church," says Dr. Ridgeley, in a previous part of his work, (See conclusion of Sect. 'The meaning of the phrases, the Visible and the Invisible Church,' under this Quest.) "are the children of God by faith;" but "the members of the visible church are the children of God as made partakers of the external dispensation of the covenant of grace." All, then, who enjoy the ministry of the gospel—for that alone can be meant by the external dispensation of the covenant—are members of the visible church, and of course are to be admitted to its fellowship! Now, in what conceivable sense are they 'the children of God?' By what imaginable process does the mere enjoyment of the gospel ministry constitute persons Christians? In what consistent or vindicable sense can men who are destitute of faith in Christ be regarded as members of his body and subjects of his kingdom? To talk of the *Israelites* having been the children of God, is only to confess the folly of the sentiment in question. For if all persons under the external dispensation of the covenant are the children of God because the Israelites were so, the offering of wine and oil must be a Christian act of thanksgiving, and the burning of incense a Christian act of prayer. These

'carnal' acts were not less certainly symbolical of spiritual affections, than the act of circumcision was symbolical of the regeneration of the heart, or the outward sonship of an Israelite symbolical of the inward and heaven-born sonship of 'a new creature in Christ Jesus' Dr. Ridgeley's principle, then, of esteeming all who enjoy 'the external dispensation of the covenant of grace' to be 'the children of God' and 'members of the visible church,' till they 'give the lie' to their profession, is directly contradictory of the only sound qualification for church-membership which he had himself virtually stated,—satisfactory evidence of regenerated and believing character.

Dr. Ridgeley further says, 'The visible church is compared to the net which had good and bad fish in it, or to the great house in which are vessels of various kinds, some to honour and some to dishonour.' Now, what our Lord compares to 'the net' is, not 'the visible church,' but the kingdom of heaven, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, the reign of heaven, the dispensation of divine mercy over our world. But this kingdom, this reign, this dispensation, extends to at least all persons who have access to the truths of the Christian revelation, or who enjoy opportunity of approaching the ministrations of the Christian economy. Accordingly, the very chapter (Matt. xiii.) which compares the kingdom of heaven to a net, compares it also to the sowing of seed, (compare verse 3 with verses 10, 11.) and to the joint growth of tares and wheat, verses 24—30. Hence, if the fish of all kinds caught in the net mean men of various characters united to the visible church, he who receives the seed by the wayside, and from whom the wicked one catches it away,—he who receives the seed among thorns, and in whom the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and render it unfruitful,—and he who receives the seed into stony places, and who has not root in himself, but by and by, because of the word, is offended,—are all as legitimately and literally members of the church, as he who received the seed into good ground, and in whom it bears fruit and brings forth thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold. Yet who, with a mind unobscured by false ideas of ecclesiastical economy, or with his thoughts fixed on the principles and model of church-discipline exhibited in the New Testament, does not see that the latter character only—he who produces fruit, or affords some evidence of his having spiritually profited by the ministry of the word—alone is entitled to enter the fellowship of 'a church of saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus?' Again, as to the illustration of 'the kingdom of heaven' by the parable of the tares and the wheat,—the field mentioned in the parable must, according to Dr. Ridgeley's view of the parallel parable of the net, be the visible church. No, says our Saviour, 'the field is the world.' The tares and the wheat, also, must be the associate or commingled body of persons 'making a profession of religion' and living together as fellow-members of the church. No, says our Lord, 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.' The party, likewise, who placed the tares and the wheat together, must be the Christian ministers of the visible church who admit all who make a profession to its fellowship. No, says our Lord, the party who 'sowed the tares,' or who intermixed them with the wheat, is 'an enemy,' and that enemy is 'the devil.' The very text, then, to which Dr. Ridgeley appeals in support of his notion of qualification for church-membership, directly denounces as 'the world,' and as the work of the destroyer, what that notion exhibits as the visible church and the legitimate work of Christian ministers. The parables to which I have referred are a warning to Christian churches and pastors scarcely less solemn than the injunctions and denunciations as to putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, (Ezek. xxii. 25, 26; xlii. 23.) to use such care in admitting none to their fellowship but those who afford scriptural evidence of having spiritually profited by the gospel, that 'of the rest no man shall dare join himself to them,' Acts v. 13.—ED.]

[NOTE F. *The Office of a Ruling Elder.*—Dr. Ridgeley writes quite unlike himself on the subject of ruling elders. He is eminent above most theological writers for appealing directly and solely 'to the law and to the testimony.' Very seldom, on even a very subordinate question, does he advance an opinion without referring to one or more texts in which he supposes it to be taught. His holding, therefore, that there may be ruling elders, and being able to adduce no better reason for it than 'I cannot but think' that it is allowable, is a tacit and somewhat emphatic confession that the doctrine is untenable on scriptural grounds. As to 'the necessity of the church' in any emergency requiring any additional office to those instituted by Christ or obviously sanctioned by the New Testament, or as to 'the work of preaching and ruling' in any instance being 'too much' for a pastor, and of such a kind as to render another set of office-bearers 'advisable,' the case is altogether imaginary. Cases of supposed 'emergency,' 'necessity,' or 'advisableness,' can never, in a legitimate course of scriptural church order and discipline, outstrip the provision made by 'the Shepherd and Bishop of souls' for all his churches. Whenever they are alleged to do so, the interested parties are themselves the judges both of the necessity or emergency, and of the means for surmounting it, or of the remedy to be applied. All judge according to their respective temper and inclinations. What one calls an emergency, another calls an ordinary event; what one esteems a reason for introducing new, and, it may be, pompous and dignified offices, another esteems an evidence that the old and legitimate offices are corrupted, and require to be revived or restated in their primitive simplicity and vigour. Once admit, in fact, that any office may be instituted in Christian churches, or any machinery of ecclesiastical economy erected on the principle of expediency, and an inlet and a sanction are afforded for exactly such a species of procedure, or course of innovation, as overthrew in the third and following centuries the pure and simple constitution of the primitive churches, and erected in its stead the complex ritual, and the prelatical, metropolitanical, patriarchal, papal government of the Romish hierarchy.—ED.]

THE BENEFITS ENJOYED BY THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

QUESTION LXV. *What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?*

ANSWER. The members of the invisible church, by Christ, enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.

QUESTION LXVI. *What is that union which the elect have with Christ?*

ANSWER. The union which the elect have with Christ, is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably joined to Christ, as their head and husband, which is done in their effectual calling.

In the preceding part of this work we considered man as at first made upright, as not having continued in that state, and as having plunged into those depths of sin and misery which would have rendered his state altogether desperate, without the interposition of a Mediator. Under several Answers we considered also the designation of Christ to his mediatorial work, his fitness for it, and his faithful discharge of it. We there had an account of his Person as God-man; his offices of prophet, priest, and king; his twofold state of humiliation and exaltation; and the benefits which accrue to his church. The church was considered either as visible or as invisible; and the former as enjoying many privileges which respect, more especially, the ordinary means of salvation.

What the Benefits are which the Invisible Church enjoys.

We are now led to consider the benefits which the members of the invisible church, namely, the whole number of the elect, which have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ their head, enjoy by him. These are of two general classes, namely, union and communion with him in grace and in glory; and they comprise the blessings of both worlds, as the result of their relation to and interest in him. They are first united to him, and then are made partakers of his benefits. All grace imparted to us here, is the result of union with him. 'Of him,' says the apostle, 'are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'ⁱ 'He that abideth in me,' says our Saviour, 'and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.'^k And the contrary to this is inconsistent with the exercise of any grace: 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Moreover, that communion which the saints have with Christ in glory, whereby they who are brought to a state of perfection participate of those graces and comforts which flow from their continued union with Christ, and the first-fruits or foretastes of glory which they have in this world, are also founded on union to the Saviour. Accordingly, the apostle calls Christ, in his people, 'the hope of glory';^l and, speaking of his giving eternal life to them, he considers them as being 'in his hand,' whence 'none shall pluck them out,'^m or separate them from him. They shall, therefore, enjoy everlasting happiness with him, inasmuch as they shall 'be found in him.'ⁿ

What Union to Christ is.

We are thus led particularly to consider what union with Christ is. The scripture often speaks of Christ's being or abiding in his people, and they in him; and assigns this union as an evidence of their interest in the blessings he has purchased for them. Indeed, it is from hence that all internal and practical godliness is derived. This privilege argues infinite condescension in him, and tends to the highest advancement of those who are its subjects. That we may understand what is intended by it, let us take heed that we do not include in it any thing which tends on the one hand to extenuate it, or on the other, to exalt those who are made partakers of it above the station or condition into which they are brought by it. It

i 1 Cor. i. 30.

k John xv. 5.

l Col. i. 27.

m John x. 28.

n Phil. iii. 9.

is not sufficient to suppose that this union implies no more than that his people have the same kind of nature with him, as being made 'partakers of flesh and blood,' he having 'himself taken part of the same.'^o He is indeed allied to us, as having all the essential perfections of our nature; and his coming into this alliance was a display of infinite condescension in him, and absolutely necessary to our redemption. Yet this similitude of nature, abstracted from other considerations accompanying or flowing from his incarnation, involves no other idea of union between Christ and his people, than that which they have with one another; nor is it a privilege peculiar to believers, since Christ took on him the same human nature which all men have, though with a peculiar design of grace to those whom he came to redeem. This I take particular notice of, because the Socinians, and others who speak of this privilege, inasmuch as it is often mentioned in scripture, appear to have very low thoughts of it, when they suppose it to mean nothing more than common participation of human nature.—Again, union with Christ includes more than the mutual love which is between Christ and believers, in the sense in which there is an union of affection between those who love one another. It is said, 'The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.'^p Now, in such a union of affection, believers are united to one another; or, as the apostle expresses it, their hearts are 'knit together in love,'^q 'being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind;'^r or, as he adds, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'^s I say, union with Christ includes more than this; which is rather the fruit and consequence of that union, than the matter in which it principally consists.—Moreover, we must take heed that we do not, in explaining the union between Christ and believers, include more in it than what belongs to creatures infinitely below him to whom they are said to be united. We cannot but abhor the blasphemy of those who speak of an essential union of creatures with God, or of their having such an union as gave them something in common with Christ the great Mediator.^t

But passing by these methods of explaining the union between Christ and believers, there are two senses in which it is understood in scripture. One is, that which results from Christ's being their federal head, representative, or surety; having undertaken to deal with the justice of God in their behalf, so that what he should do, as standing in this relation to them, should be placed to their account, as much as if it had been done by them in their own persons. This is what gives them a concern in the covenant of grace, made with him in their behalf,—of which something was said under a preceding Answer;^u and it is the foundation of their sins having been imputed to him, and of his righteousness being imputed to them,—which will be farther considered, when we treat of the doctrine of justification under a following Answer.^x The union with Christ which is mentioned in the Answer we are now explaining, is of another nature; and, in some respects, may be properly styled a *vital union*, as all spiritual life is derived from it, or a *conjugal union*, as it is founded in consent, and said to be by faith. Now there are two things observed concerning it.

1. It is expressed by our being spiritually and mystically joined to Christ. It

^o Heb. ii. 14.

^p 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

^q Col. ii. 2.

^r Phil. ii. 2.

^s Verse 5.

^t The first who seems to have used this unsavoury mode of speaking, is Gregory Nazianzen; who did not consider how inconsistent some of those rhetorical ways of speaking he seems fond of, are with that doctrine which, in other parts of his writings, he maintained. Those words *Χριστοποιουν*, and *Θεοποιουν*, which he sometimes uses to express the nature or consequence of this union between Christ and believers, are very disgusting. In one place of his writings, [Vid. ejusd. Orat. 41.] exhorting Christians to be like Christ, he says, 'because he became like unto us,' *γινωμιθα Θεοι δι' αυτον*, 'efficiamur dii propter ipsum;' and elsewhere [in Orat. 35. de Filio.] he says, 'Hic homo Deus effectus postea quam cum Deo coaluit,' *ινα γινωμαι τοσουτον Θεος οσον εκεινος ανθρωπος γεννηθη*, 'ut ipse quoque tantum Deus efficiar quantum ipse homo.' Some modern writers have been fond of the same mode of speaking, especially among those who, from their mysterious and unintelligible mode of expressing themselves, have rather exposed than defended the doctrines of the gospel. We find expressions of a similar nature in a book put forth by Luther, which is supposed to have been written by Taulerus, before the Reformation, called *Theologia Germanica*. Some others also, since that time, such as Paracelsus, Swenckfelt, Weigelius, and those enthusiasts who have adhered to their unintelligible and blasphemous modes of speaking, have used similar expressions.

^u See Sect. 'Proofs of the Covenant of Grace,' under Quest. xxxi., &c. . . . Quest. lxx.

is styled a *spiritual* union, in opposition to those gross and carnal conceptions which persons may entertain concerning things being joined together in a natural way. Indeed, whatever respects salvation, is of a spiritual nature.—It is, moreover, called a *mystical* union; which is the word most used by those who treat on this subject. The reason is, that the apostle calls it ‘a great mystery,’^y a phrase which we are not, as the Papists pretend,^z to understand as meaning the union between man and wife, as set forth in the similitude by which the apostle had just illustrated this doctrine, but which we are to understand as meaning the union between Christ and his church. This is styled ‘a mystery,’ probably because it could never have been known without divine revelation; and because, as Christ’s condescension, expressed in it, can never be sufficiently admired, so it cannot be fully comprehended by us. It is such a nearness to him, and such a display of love in him, as ‘passeth knowledge.’ There are, however, some similitudes used in scripture to illustrate it.—One of these is the union which there is between the vine and the branches.^a As by this, life, nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness are conveyed to them; so all our spiritual life, together with the exercise and increase of grace, depend on our union with Christ, our abiding in him, and our deriving from him what is necessary for these ends.—Union with Christ is compared also to the union between the head and members of a body. Thus the apostle farther illustrates it, when he styles him ‘the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.’^b This is a very beautiful similitude; whereby we are given to understand, that, as the head is the fountain of life and motion to the whole body, the nerves and animal spirits taking their rise thence, so that if the communication between them and it were stopped the members would be useless, dead, and insignificant; so Christ is the fountain of spiritual life and motion to all those who are united to him.—Again, union with Christ is illustrated by a similitude taken from the union between the foundation and the building. Accordingly, Christ is styled, in scripture, ‘the chief corner-stone,’^c and ‘a sure foundation.’^d There is something peculiar in the phrase which the apostle uses, which is more than any similitude can express, when he speaks of Christ as ‘the living stone,’ or rock, on which the church is built, and of believers as ‘lively stones,’^e to denote that they are not only supported and upheld by him, as the building is by the foundation, but enabled to put forth living actions, as those whose life is derived from their union with him.—There is another similitude, taken from the nourishment which the body receives by the use of food. Our Saviour styles himself ‘the bread of life,’ or ‘the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die;’ and proceeds to speak of his ‘giving his flesh for the life of the world;’ and adds, ‘He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.’^f—There is still another similitude, by which our being united to Christ by faith is more especially illustrated, taken from the union between husband and wife. Accordingly, the union between Christ and believers is generally styled a conjugal union. Thus the prophet says, ‘Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.’^g And the apostle, speaking of a man’s ‘leaving his father and mother, and being joined unto his wife, and they two being one flesh,’^h applies it, as was formerly observed, to the union between Christ and the

y Eph. v. 32.

z This is the principal, if not the only scripture, from which they pretend to prove marriage to be a sacrament, and they argue thus: The Greek church had no other word to express what was afterwards called a sacrament by the Latin church, but *μυστήριον*, ‘a mystery.’ Hence, as the apostle calls marriage, as they suppose, a mystery, they conclude that it is a sacrament. This is a very weak foundation for inserting it among the sacraments which they have added to those which Christ instituted; for the sacraments are nowhere called mysteries in scripture. Nor are we to explain doctrines by words which were not used till some ages after the apostle’s time. Even if there were any thing in their argument, that that which is called a mystery in scripture must needs be a sacrament, it does not appear that the apostle calls marriage ‘a great mystery.’ For he gives this name to the union that there is between Christ and his church; as he expressly says in the following words: ‘I speak concerning Christ and the church.’

a John xv. 1, 2, 5.

b Coloss. ii. 19.

c Eph. ii. 20.

d Isa. xxviii. 16.

e 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

f John vi. 48—56.

g Isa. liv. 5.

h Eph. v. 31, 32.

church ; and adds, that ‘we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.’ⁱ This expression, if not compared with other scriptures, would be very hard to be understood ; but it may be explained by similar phraseology, used elsewhere. Thus, when God formed Eve, and brought her to Adam, and thereby joined them in a conjugal relation, Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.’^k We find also that other relations, which are more remote than this, are expressed by the same mode of speaking. Thus Laban says to Jacob, ‘Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.’^l And Abimelech, pleading the relation he stood in to the men of Shechem, as a pretence of his right to reign over them, tells them, ‘I am your bone and your flesh.’^m Hence the apostle makes use of this expression, agreeably to the common mode of speaking used in scripture, to set forth the conjugal relation between Christ and believers.—The apostle, indeed, elsewhere alters the phrase, when he says, ‘He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.’ⁿ This is so difficult an expressson, that some who treat on the subject, though concluding that there is in it something which denotes the intimacy and nearness of this union, and more than what is contained in the other phrase, of their ‘being one flesh,’ nevertheless reckon it among those expressions which are inexplicable. Yet I cannot but adopt the sense in which some understand it ; namely, that, inasmuch as the same spirit dwells in believers which dwelt in Christ, though with different views and designs, they are wrought up, in their measure, to the same temper and disposition ; or as it is expressed elsewhere, ‘the same mind is in them that was in Christ.’^o This is such an effect of the conjugal relation between him and them, as is not always the result of the same relation amongst men. The reason why I call this our being united to Christ by faith, is that the union is founded in a mutual consent. As ‘the Lord avouches them,’ on the one hand, ‘to be his people ;’ so they, on the other hand, ‘avouch him to be their God.’^p The latter is, properly speaking, an act of faith ; whereby they give up themselves to be his servants, to all intents and purposes, and that for ever. Thus concerning our union with Christ.

It is farther observed in this Answer, that union with Christ is a work of God’s grace. This it must certainly be, since it is the spring and fountain whence all acts of grace proceed. Indeed, from the nature of the thing, it cannot be otherwise. For if there is a wonderful display of condescending grace in God’s conferring those blessings which accompany salvation, much more is there such a display in this union. If Christ be pleased to ‘dwell’ with and ‘in’ his people, and to ‘walk in’ them,^q or, as it is said elsewhere, to ‘live in them,’^r as a pledge and earnest of their being for ever with him in heaven ; and if, in consequence, they are admitted to the greatest intimacy with him ; we may, with becoming humility and admiration, take occasion to adopt what was spoken to him by one of Christ’s disciples : ‘How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world ?’^s Is it not a great instance of grace, that the Son of God should make choice of so mean an habitation as that of the souls of sinful men, and not only be present with but united to them in those instances which have been already considered ?

2. It is farther observed in this Answer, that we are united to Christ in effectual calling ; and this leads us to consider what is contained in the two following Answers.

i Eph. v. 30.

n 1 Cor. vi. 17.

r Gal. ii. 20

k Gen. ii. 23.

o Phil. ii. 5.

s John xiv. 22.

l Gen. xxix. 14.

p Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

m Judges ix. 2.

q 2 Cor. vi. 16.

EFFECTUAL CALLING.

QUESTION LXVII. *What is effectual calling?*

ANSWER. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace; whereby, out of his free and especial love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto, he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit, savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills; so as they, although in themselves dead in sin, are hereby made willing and able, freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

QUESTION LXVIII. *Are the elect effectually called?*

ANSWER. All the elect; and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

The General Nature of the Gospel Call.

We have, in these Answers, an account of the first step that God takes, in applying the redemption purchased by Christ. This is expressed, in general, by the word 'calling;' whereby sinners are invited, commanded, encouraged, and enabled to come to Christ, in order to their being made partakers of his benefits. The apostle styles it 'an high, holy, and heavenly calling;'^t and a being 'called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.'^u Herein we are 'called out of darkness into his marvellous light,'^x and 'unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.'^y Indeed, the word is very emphatic. For, a call supposes a person to be separate, or at a distance, from him who calls him; and it contains an intimation of leave to come into his presence. Thus, in effectual calling, he who had departed from God, is brought nigh to him. God, as it were, says to him, as he did to Adam, when fleeing from him, dreading nothing so much as his presence, and apprehending himself exposed to the stroke of his vindictive justice, 'Where art thou?'^z which is styled, 'God's calling unto him.' Or it is as when a traveller is taking a wrong way, and in danger of falling into some pit or snare, and a kind friend calls after him to return, and sets him in the right way. Thus God calls to sinners; as the prophet expresses it, 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.' In this call, God deals with men as reasonable creatures; and his doing so is by no means to be excluded from our ideas of the work of grace. Though this work implies some superior or supernatural methods of acting, in order to its being brought about; yet we may be under a divine influence, in turning to God, or in being effectually called by him, and accordingly may be acted upon by a supernatural principle, while, at the same time, our understandings or reasoning powers, are not rendered useless, but enlightened or improved thereby; by which means, every thing we do, in obedience to the call of God, appears to be most just and reasonable. This method of explaining the doctrine, wards off the absurd consequence charged upon us, that we represent God as if he dealt with us as stocks and stones. But more shall be said on this point under a following Head.

We shall now proceed more particularly, to consider the subject of these two Answers; wherein we have an account of the difference between the *external* call of the gospel, which is explained in the latter of them, and the *internal*, saving, and powerful call, which is justly termed *effectual*, and is considered in the former of them.

The External Call of the Gospel.

We shall first speak concerning the outward and common call of the gospel, together with the persons to whom it is given, the design of God in giving it, and

^t Phil. iii. 14; 2 Tim. i. 9; Heb. iii. 1.
^y 1 Pet. v. 10.

^z Gen. iii. 9.

^u 1 Cor. i. 9.

^x 1 Pet. ii. 9.

the issue of it with respect to a great number of those who are said to be called. The reason why we choose to insist on this common call in the first place, is, that it is antecedent to the other, and made subservient to it in the method of the divine dispensation; for we are first favoured with the word and ordinances, and then these are made effectual to salvation.

1. We shall consider, then, what we are to understand by this common call. It is observed, that it is by the ministry of the word; in which Christ is set forth in his person and offices, and sinners are called to come to him, and, in so doing, to be made partakers of the blessings which he has purchased. Thus, to set forth Christ and invite sinners is the sum and substance of the gospel-ministry; and it is illustrated^a by the parable of 'the marriage-feast.' When 'the king' had made this feast 'for his son,' he 'sent his servants,' by whom are meant gospel ministers, to 'call' or invite persons, and therein to use all persuasive arguments to prevail with them to come to it. This is styled their being 'called.' And the observation made on persons refusing to comply with this call, 'Many are called, but few are chosen,'^b plainly intimates that our Saviour here means no other than a common or ineffectual call. In another parable the same thing is illustrated by 'an householder's hiring labourers into his vineyard,'^c at several hours of the day. Some were hired early in the morning, at the third hour; others, at the sixth and the ninth. This denotes the gospel call which the Jewish church had to come to Christ, before his incarnation, under the ceremonial law. And others were hired at the eleventh hour; denoting those who were called by the ministry of Christ and his disciples. That this was only a common and external call, is evident, not only from the intimation that they who had 'borne the burden and heat of the day,' that is, for many ages had been a proëssing people, 'murmured' because others who were called at the eleventh hour had an equal share in his regard; but also from what is expressly said—the words being the same as those with which the other parable is closed—'Many be called, but few chosen.'^d Moreover, the apostle intends this common call, when he speaks of some who had been 'called into the grace of Christ;' not called by the power and efficacious grace of Christ, as denoting that the call was effectual; but called or invited to come and receive the grace of Christ, or called externally, and thereby entreated to embrace the doctrine of the grace of Christ. These are said to have been 'soon removed unto another gospel.'^e Elsewhere,^f too, he speaks of some who, when 'the truth,' or the doctrines of the gospel, were first presented to them, expressed, for a time, a readiness to receive it,—on which account he says, 'Ye did run well,' or, ye began well; but who afterwards did not yield the obedience of faith to that truth which they seemed at first to have a very great regard to. Hence, the apostle says concerning them, 'This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.'^g

They who express some regard to this call, are generally said to have *common* grace, as distinguished from others who are under the powerful and efficacious influence of the Spirit, which is styled *special*. The former are often under some impressive influences by the common work of the Spirit, under the preaching of the gospel, and, notwithstanding, are in an unconverted state. Their consciences are sometimes awakened, and they bring many charges and accusations against themselves; and from a dread of consequences, they abstain from many enormous crimes, as well as practise several duties of religion. They are also said to be made partakers of some great degrees of restraining grace. These results all arise from no other than the Spirit's common work of conviction; as he is said to 'reprove the world of sin.'^h They are styled, in this Answer, 'the common operations of the Spirit.' They may be called operations, inasmuch as they include something more than God's sending ministers to address themselves to sinners, in a way of persuasion or arguing; for, the Spirit of God deals with their consciences under the ministry of the word. It is true, this is no more than common grace; yet it may be styled the Spirit's work. For though the call is no other than common; and though the Spirit is considered as an external agent, inasmuch as he never dwells

a Matt. xxii. 1, et seq.
e Gal. i. 6.

b Verse 14.
f Chap. v. 7.

c Matt. xx. 1, et seq.
g Verse 8.

d Verse 16.
h John xvi. 8.

in the hearts of any but believers; yet the effect produced is internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in some degree, in the will, which is almost persuaded to comply. These operations are sometimes called 'the Spirit's striving with man.'ⁱ But as many of these internal motions are said to be resisted and quenched,—when persons first act contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and afterwards wholly extinguish them,—the Spirit's work in those whom he thus calls, is not effectual or saving. These are not united to Christ by his Spirit or by faith; and the grace which they possess is generally styled common grace. [See Note G, page 75.]

Here let us consider that there are some things presented to us in an objective way, which contain the subject of the gospel, or that call which is given to sinners to pursue those methods which, by divine appointment, lead to salvation. As 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God';^k so do common convictions, and whatever carries the appearance of grace in the unregenerate. In this respect God deals with men as intelligent creatures, capable of making some such improvement of those instructions and intimations as may tend, in many respects, to their advantage. This must be supposed, else the preaching of the gospel could not, abstractedly from those saving advantages which some receive by it, be reckoned an universal blessing to those who are favoured with it. This is here called the grace which is offered to those who are outwardly called by the ministry of the word. Offers of grace, and invitations to come to Christ, are words used by almost all who have treated on this subject. Of late, indeed, some have been ready to conclude that these modes of speaking tend to overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining; for they argue that an overture, or invitation, supposes a power in him to whom it is given to comply with it. Did I think this idea necessarily contained in the expressions, I would choose to substitute others in the room of them. However, to remove prejudices or unjust representations which the use of them may occasion, either here or elsewhere, I shall briefly give an account of the reason why I use them, and what I understand by them. If it be said that such expressions are not to be found in scripture, the circumstance of their not being there should make us less tenacious of them. Yet they may be used without just offence given, if explained agreeably to scripture. Let it be considered, then, that the presenting of an object, whatever it be, to the understanding and will, is generally called an 'offering' of it. Thus God says to David, from the Lord, 'I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them,'^l &c. So, if God sets before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and bids us choose which we will have, his doing so is equivalent to what is generally called an offer of grace. As for invitations to come to Christ, it is plain that there are many scriptures which speak to that purpose. Thus it is said, 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'^m And, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'ⁿ And elsewhere Christ says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'^o And, 'Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.'^p Moreover, when an offer or invitation to accept of a thing, thus objectively presented to us, is made, the offer of it always supposes that it is valuable, that it would be greatly our interest to accept it, and that it is our indispensable duty to do so. Now, these are the principal ideas which I include in my sense of the word, when I speak of offers of grace in the gospel, or of invitations to come to Christ. Yet understanding the offers in this sense, does not necessarily infer a power in us to accept them, without the assistance of divine grace. Thus it may be said that Christ came into the world to save sinners; that he will certainly apply the redemption which he has purchased, to all for whom the price was given; that a right to salvation is inseparably connected with faith and repentance; that these and all other graces are God's gifts; that we are to pray, wait, and hope for them, under the ministry of the word; that, if we be, in God's own time and way, enabled to exercise these graces, our being so will be to our unspeakable advantage; and that, therefore, it cannot but be our duty to attend upon God in all his holy institutions,

i Gen. vi. 3.
n Isa. lv. 1.

k Rom. x. 17.
o Matt. xi. 28.

l 2 Sam. xxiv. 12.
p Rev. xxii. 17.

m John vii. 37

in hope of saving blessings ;—these things may be said, and the gospel may be thus preached, without supposing that grace is in our own power. Now this is what we principally intend by gospel overtures or invitations. At the same time, we cannot approve of some expressions subversive of the doctrine of special redemption, how moving and pathetic soever they may appear to be ; as when any one, to induce sinners to come to Christ, says, “God is willing ; and Christ is willing, and has done his part ; and the Spirit is ready to do his ; and shall we be unwilling, and thereby destroy ourselves ? Christ has purchased salvation for us ; the Spirit offers his assistance to us ; and shall we refuse these overtures ? Christ invites us to come to him, and leaves it to our free will, whether we will comply with or reject these invitations. He is, as it were, undetermined whether he shall save us or not, and leaves the matter to our own conduct. We ought, therefore, to be persuaded to comply with the invitation.” This method of explaining offers of grace, and invitations to come to Christ, is not what we intend when we make use of these expressions.

2. We are now to consider the persons to whom this common call is given. It is indefinite, not directed to the elect only, or those with respect to whom God designs to make it effectual to their salvation ; for, according to the commission which our Saviour gave to his apostles, the gospel was to be preached to all nations, or to every creature in those places to which it was sent. The reason is obvious ; the counsel of God concerning election is secret, and not to be considered as the rule of human conduct ; nor are they whom God is pleased to employ in preaching the gospel, supposed to know whether he will give success to their endeavours, by enabling those who are called to comply with it.

3. We shall now show how far the gospel call may, without the superadded assistance of special grace, be improved by men, in order to their attaining some advantage by it, though short of salvation. This may be done in two respects : gross crimes may be avoided ; and some things may be done which, though not good in all those circumstances which accompany or flow from regenerating grace, are materially good. That gross enormous crimes may be avoided, appears in many unconverted persons, who not only avoid but abhor them ; being induced by something in nature which gives an aversion to them. The point may be argued too, from the liableness of those who commit gross crimes to punishment in proportion to their respective aggravations ; for either this must suppose in man a power to avoid them, or else the greatest degree of punishment would be the result of a necessity of nature, and not self-procured by any act of man’s will,—though all suppose the will to be free with respect to actions which are sinful. It would be a very poor excuse for the murderer to allege, that he could not govern his passion, but was under an unavoidable necessity to take away the life of another. Shall the man who commits those sins which are contrary to nature, say that his natural temper and disposition is so much inclined to them that he could by no means avoid them ? If our natural constitution be so depraved and vitiated, that it leads us, with an uncommon and impetuous violence, to those sins which we were not formerly inclined to, whence does this arise, but from the habits of vice being increased by a wilful and obstinate perseverance, and by the many repeated acts which they have produced ? And might not this, at least, in some degree, have been avoided ? We must distinguish between habits of sin which flow immediately from the universal corruption of nature, and those which have taken deeper root in us by being indulged, and by exerting themselves, without any endeavours used, to restrain and check them. And if it be supposed that our natures are more habitually inclined to sin than once they were, might we not so far use the liberty of our wills as to avoid some things which, we are sensible, will prove a temptation to particular acts of sin ; by which means the corruption of nature, which is so prone to comply with temptation, might be in some measure restrained, though not overcome ? This may be done without converting grace ; and, consequently, some great sins be avoided. To deny this, would be not only to palliate all manner of licentiousness, but to open a door for it.—Again, man has a power to do some things which are materially good, though not good in all those circumstances which accompany or flow from regenerating grace. Ahab’s humility,^q and Nineveh’s repentance,^r arose from the dread they

^q 1 Kings xxi. 29.

^r Jonah iii. 5, et seq.

had of the divine threatenings; which is such an inducement to repentance and reformation, as takes its rise from nothing more than the influence of common grace. Herod himself, though a vile person, 'feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy; and when he heard him, did many things, and heard him gladly.'^s The Gentiles also are said to 'do by nature the things,' that is, some things, 'contained in the law;' insomuch that 'they are a law unto themselves.'^t Hence they did them by the influence of common grace. Now these things, namely, abstaining from grosser sins, and doing some actions materially good, have certainly some advantage attending them; as thereby the world is not so much like hell as it would otherwise be, and as to themselves, a greater degree of punishment is avoided.

4. We are now to consider the design of God in giving the common call in the gospel. That this cannot be the salvation of all who are thus called, is evident; because all shall not be saved. If God had designed their salvation, he would certainly have brought it about; since his purpose cannot be frustrated. To say that God has no determinations relating to the success of the gospel, reflects on his wisdom; and to conclude that things may happen contrary to his purpose argues a defect of power, as if he could not attain the ends he designed. But this having been insisted on under the heads of election and special redemption, I shall pass it by at present, and only consider that the ends which God designed in giving the gospel, were such as are attained by it, namely, the salvation of those who shall eventually be saved, the restraining of those who have only common grace, and the setting forth of the glorious work of redemption by Jesus Christ; which, as it is the wonder of angels, who desire to look into it, so it is designed in the preaching of the gospel to be recommended as worthy of the highest esteem, even in those who cast contempt on it. By the preaching of the gospel, also, those are convicted who shut their eyes against the glorious light which shines so brightly in it, or neglect to behold that light.

It is objected that Christ invites and calls men to come to him, as he often does in the New Testament, and when they refuse to comply, mentions their refusal with a kind of regret; as when he says, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.'^u The objectors hence infer that the preaching of the gospel, according to our view of it, is no other than an insult on mankind, a bidding them come without the least design that they should; as if a magistrate should go to the prison door, and tell the unhappy man who is not only under lock and key but loaded with irons, that he would have him leave that place of misery and confinement, and how much he should rejoice if he would come out, and upon condition of his doing so, propose to him several honours which he has in reserve for him. This, say they, is not to deal seriously with him. And if the offer of grace in the gospel answers the similitude, as they suppose it exactly does, there is no need for any thing farther to be replied to it: the doctrine confutes itself; as it argues the divine dealings with men to be illusory. But the similitude, how plausible soever it may appear to some, is far from giving a just representation of the doctrine we are maintaining. For when the magistrate is supposed to signify his desire that the prisoner would set himself free, which he knows he cannot do; hereby it is intimated, that though God knows that the sinner cannot convert himself, yet he commands him to do it, or to put forth supernatural acts of grace, though he has no principle of grace in him. But let it be considered that God nowhere commands any to do this. Our Saviour implies that he nowhere does so, when he speaks of 'the tree being made good' before the fruit it produces can be so;^x or that it is impossible for men 'to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles';^y implying that there must be an internal disposition wrought, before any acts of grace can be put forth. This is supposed in the preaching of the gospel, or the call to sinners to repent and believe; which they have no reason to conclude that they can do without the aids of divine grace, and these they are to wait, pray, and hope for, in all God's instituted methods. As to the statement in the objection respecting promises made to us on the condition that we would release ourselves from the chains of sin, and con-

s Mark vi. 20.

t Rom. ii. 14.

u John v. 40.

x Matt. xii. 33.

y Chap. vii. 16.

cerning the joy God would have in our being set free, when the thing is in itself impossible ; it is no otherwise true than as it contains a declaration of the connection there is between conversion and salvation, or between freedom from the slavery of sin and God's conferring many spiritual honours and privileges on those who are converted,—not that it does, in the least, denote that it is in our power to convert ourselves. But that this may be more clearly understood, we shall consider it with reference to the two branches of the objection, and so speak of God, either as commanding, calling, and inviting men to do what is out of their power, namely, to repent and believe, or as holding forth promises of that salvation which they shall not attain, because the graces of faith and repentance are out of their power. This is the substance of what is usually objected against the doctrine we are maintaining, by those who are on the other side of the question ; who suppose that the call of the gospel, according to our view of it, is illusory, and therefore unbecoming the divine perfections.

As to God's commanding, calling, and inviting men to do what is out of their own power, as for instance, bidding a dead man to arise, or one who is blind to see, or those who are shut up in prison to come out thence ; this is to be explained, and then, perhaps, the doctrine we are maintaining will appear to be less exceptionable. We have elsewhere, in defending the doctrine of particular redemption against an objection not much unlike this, considered how Christ is said to be offered in the gospel,^z or in what sense the overture may be said to be made to all who are favoured with it, while the efficacy of it extends to those only whom Christ has redeemed, and who shall be effectually called. But that we may a little farther explain this matter, let us consider that the gospel contains a declaration, that God designs to save a part of this miserable world, and that, in subserviency to this end, he has given them a discovery of Christ, as the object of faith, and the purchaser and author of salvation. But he does not in this declaration give the least intimation to any, while in a state of unregeneracy, that they shall be enabled to believe, and, in consequence, be saved. The names, characters, or places of abode, or the natural embellishments of those who shall attain this privilege, are nowhere pointed at in scripture. Nor is the book of God's secret purpose concerning election to eternal life opened, so that any one can discern his name written in it, before he be effectually called. We have no warrant to look any farther than God's revealed will, which assigns no evidence of our interests in the saving blessings of the gospel till they are experienced by us, in this effectual call. Again, God plainly discovers to men, in the gospel, that all those graces which are inseparably connected with salvation, are his work and gift, and consequently out of their own power ; or that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.'^a He nowhere tells the man who 'is tied and bound with the chain of his sin,' that he is able to set himself free ; but puts him upon expecting and praying for it, from 'the pitifulness of his great mercy.' He nowhere tells him, that he can implant a principle of spiritual life and grace in himself, or that he ought so much as to attempt to do any thing to atone for his sins, by his obedience and sufferings ; but suggests the contrary, and says, 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'^b Further, he gives none the least ground to expect or lay claim to salvation, till they believe ; and as both faith and salvation are his gifts, he puts them upon seeking and desiring them in their respective order, first grace, and then glory. Moreover, the gospel call is designed to put men upon a diligent attendance on the ordinances, as means of grace, and to leave the issue and success to God who 'waits that he may be gracious,'—that so his sovereignty may appear more eminently in the dispensing of this privilege ; and, in the mean time, he assigns it as their duty to 'wait for him.'^c And while we are engaged in this waiting, we are to acknowledge that we have nothing which can give us any right to the privilege we are seeking. We infer, therefore, that God might justly deny success to his ordinances. Yet if he is pleased to give us, while we are attending on them, earnest desires that they may be made effectual to our conversion and salvation, we

^z See Sect. 'Examination of Arguments for Universal Redemption,' under Quest. xlv.

^a Rom. ix. 16.

^b Isa. xlv. 24.

^c Chap. xxx. 18.

may conclude his doing so to be a token for good, that he designs us some special advantage. Nor do we know but that even those desires for grace may be the beginning of the Spirit's saving work, and therefore an earnest of his carrying it on. Finally, when God commands persons, in the gospel, to do those things which cannot be performed without his special grace, he sometimes, when he gives the command, supposes them to have a principle of spiritual life and grace, which is, in effect, to bid one who is made alive put forth living actions, which respect, more especially, the progress of grace after the work is begun. In this sense I understand those words of the apostle, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh,' that is, hath wrought, 'in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.'^d

Let us now consider the gospel as holding forth promises of salvation, when, at the same time, it is not in our power to exercise those graces which accompany it. This gives occasion to those who except against the doctrine we are maintaining, to say that it represents God as offering those blessings which he does not design to bestow. Here we have opportunity to explain what we mean, when we consider salvation as offered in the gospel. By this we understand nothing else but a declaration that all who repent and believe shall be saved; which contains a character or description of the persons who have ground to expect this privilege. Not that salvation is founded on dubious and uncertain conditions, which depend upon the power and liberty of our will; or that it depends upon impossible conditions, as if God should say, 'If man will change his own heart, and work faith and all other graces in himself, then I will save him.' All that we mean is, that those graces which are inseparably connected with salvation, are to be waited for in our attendance on all God's ordinances; and that, when he is pleased to work them, we may conclude that we have a right to the promise of salvation.

5. Having thus spoken of the gospel call, what it is, how far it may be improved by those who are destitute of special grace, and what is God's design in giving it, we proceed to consider the issue and consequence of it. It is observed in this Answer, that many wilfully neglect, contemn, or refuse to comply with it; with respect to whom it is not made effectual to their salvation. This appears from the report which Christ's disciples brought to him, concerning the excuses many made when called to come to the marriage-feast in the parable. One pretended that he had 'bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it;' another that he had 'bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them;' and another 'had married a wife, and therefore could not come.' It is elsewhere said, 'They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.'^e The prophet introduces our Saviour himself as complaining, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.'^f And the reason is, 'because Israel is not gathered;' which words are to be understood in a comparative sense, as denoting the fewness of those who complied with his gracious invitations to come to him, or were convinced by the miracles which he wrought to confirm his doctrine.—Our position is farther evident from the smallness of the number of those who are effectually prevailed upon under the gospel dispensation; which the apostle calls 'the grace of God that brings salvation, that hath appeared to all men, teaching them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' It appears, also, from the great opposition and hatred which many express to the person of Christ, who is the subject of the gospel. The prophet not only relates this as what was observed in his day; but foretells that, in after ages, a great part of mankind would not believe the report made concerning Christ, and that he should be 'despised and rejected of men,' who would 'hide, as it were, their faces from him, and not esteem him.'^g This conduct is certainly the highest contempt of the gospel; for it is an undervaluing of the greatest privileges, as if they were not worthy to be embraced, desired, or sought after. And inasmuch as the conduct is wilful, arising from the enmity of the will of man against

^d Phil. ii. 12, 13.

^e Luke xiv. 18—20. compared with Matt. xxii. 5, 6.

^f Isa. xlix. 4, 5.

^g Isa. liii. 1, 3.

God, and against the method of salvation which he has prescribed, it has a tendency to provoke his wrath ; so that those guilty of it being justly left in their unbelief, they will not come to Christ that they may have life. And as they are judicially left to themselves, they contract a greater degree of alienation from God and averseness to him, and so never truly come to Jesus Christ ; which is an awful and tremendous consideration.

This is the result with respect to those who have only the common call of the gospel. We must hence conclude that that call is not sufficient to salvation, unless there be an internal effectual call ; and what that is, will be considered under our next head. But it is here necessary to inquire, whether all men, at least those who sit under the sound of the gospel, have sufficient grace given them to be able, by their own conduct, without the internal powerful influences of the Spirit, to attain salvation. This argument is much insisted on by those who adhere to the Pelagian scheme ; so that we cannot wholly pass it over. Now, every one must allow that all who sit under the sound of the gospel have sufficient objective grace, or sufficient external means, to lead them in the way of salvation ; for to deny this, would be to deny that the gospel is a perfect rule of faith. Accordingly, this is allowed on both sides ; and we think nothing more is intended, when God says, concerning the church of the Jews, ‘What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ?’^h But the question is, Whether there be a sufficiency of power or ability in man to enable him, without the internal efficacious grace of God determining and inclining his will, to make a right improvement of the gospel for his salvation ? This is what we cannot but deny. For, that the external means of grace are not rendered effectual to the salvation of all who are favoured with them, is evident ; because, as was just observed, many neglect and condemn the gospel. And as to others who improve it, so that the means of grace become effectual, it must be inquired, What is it that makes them so ? how comes it that the preaching of the gospel is styled to some a savour of life, to others a savour of death ? The answer which the Pelagians give is, that they in whom it is effectual render it so by their improving the liberty of their will ; so that they choose what is represented in the gospel as eligible, and refuse the contrary. And if the question be asked, ‘Who maketh thee to differ from another ?’ they have, when disposed to speak agreeably to their own scheme, this answer ready at hand, ‘I make myself to differ ;’ which is as much as to say, ‘I have a natural power of improving the means of grace, without having recourse to God for any farther assistance in a supernatural way.’ It may easily be observed that this supposition is greatly derogatory to the glory of God, and renders all dependence on him, both to will and to do, unnecessary. It supposes that we have sufficient ability to work those graces in ourselves which accompany salvation ; otherwise the grace is not sufficient to salvation. The supposition, therefore, is contrary to all those scriptures which speak of the graces which accompany salvation as the work or the effect of the exceeding greatness of the power of God.

The Previous Character of Persons who are Effectually Called.

We are now led to consider the doctrine of effectual calling, as stated in the former of the Answers which we are explaining. At present we shall inquire into the antecedent character of those who are effectually called. They have nothing which can recommend them to the divine favour ; for, being considered as fallen, guilty creatures, they are unable not only to make atonement for sin, but to do what is spiritually good. Thus the apostle represents them as ‘without strength ;’ⁱ which is the immediate consequence of man’s first apostacy from God. Universal experience, also, proves that we have a propensity to everything which is evil, and that this propensity daily increases. We may add, that the mind is blinded, the affections stupified, the will full of obstinacy, the conscience disposed to deal treacherously, whereby we deceive ourselves ; so that the whole soul is out of order. The apostle speaks of man ‘by nature,’ as ‘dead in trespasses and sins,

^h Isa. v. 4.

ⁱ Rom. v. 6.

walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.^k The prophet speaks of 'the heart' of man as being 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'^l The apostle again describes some as 'walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness:'^m and others as being 'filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.'ⁿ This, indeed, is spoken of the Gentiles, who were destitute of the means of grace, and had contracted greater degrees of impiety than many others; but they who are effectually called would have run into the same abominations, their natures being equally inclined to them, without preventing grace. Accordingly, some of the church of Corinth are said to have done so before their conversion; whom the apostle speaks of as once having been 'unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.'^o And elsewhere he says, 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.'^p The obstinacy and perverseness of men going on in a course of sin is so great, that God reproves a professing people by telling them that 'their neck was an iron sinew, and their brow brass.'^q Thus they were, before he 'refined' and 'chose' some of them, 'in the furnace of affliction.'^r It hence evidently appears, that men are not naturally inclined to comply with the gospel call; and that the privilege of willingness to comply is conferred on them, when, by the Spirit, the call is made effectual to their salvation.

It is objected to what has been said concerning persons being dead in sin, before they are effectually called, that the expression 'dead in sin' is metaphorical, and is not to be strained so far as to be made to imply that they are altogether without a power to do that which is spiritually good. But while the state of men before they are effectually called, is styled 'a death in sin,' which is a metaphorical expression, we must suppose that there is a sense affixed to it which, in some respects, is adapted to those ideas which we have of the words. If scripture metaphors prove nothing because the words are transferred from their literal sense to some other, we shall be at the greatest loss to understand many important doctrines contained in the sacred writings; which abound very much in such modes of speaking. We do not suppose the metaphor to be extended so far as to imply that a person dead in sin, is incapable of acting as if he were a stock or a stone; the contrary to which is evident from what has been already said concerning the power which they who are in an unregenerate state have of doing things materially good. But we are now considering men as unable to do what is good in all its circumstances, which may render their actions the object of the divine approbation, as agreeable to God's revealed will. This, we suppose, an unregenerate person is as unable to do, as a dead man is to put forth living actions; and the reason is, that he is destitute of a supernatural principle of spiritual life. Scripture and experience not only evince the weakness, blindness, and disinclination of such to what is good, but their aversion to it. Whatever we do, therefore, either in the beginning or in the progress of the life of faith, must proceed from a renewed nature, or a supernatural principle implanted in the soul. This is sometimes called, 'a new heart,'^s 'a divine nature,'^t as well as a quickening or a being raised from the dead.

k Eph. ii. 1—3.
o 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.
s Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

l Jer. xvii. 9.
p Tit. iii. 3.
t 2 Pet. i. 4.

m Eph. iv. 17—19.
q Isa. xlviii. 4.

n Rom. i. 29—31.
r Ver. 10.

The Change Wrought in Effectual Calling.

We are now led to consider the change which is wrought in effectual calling, together with the grounds we have to conclude that it is a supernatural work, or, as it is styled in this Answer, 'the work of God's almighty power and grace.' Those whom we more especially oppose in this head of argument, are the Pelagians, and others, who, though in some things they seem to recede from them, yet cannot support their cause without adopting their scheme, when treating on the subjects of free-will, nature, and grace. These all allow that there is a change made in conversion or effectual calling; but they suppose that it is a change in man's natural temper and disposition, rather than one arising from a supernatural principle. According to them, it consists in overcoming those habits of sin which we have contracted, and in acquiring habits of virtue,—a ceasing to do evil, and a learning to do well. They suppose also that the change is in man's own power, with the concurrence of God as the God of nature, or at least, with some superadded assistances from the external dispensations of providence, which have an influence on the minds of men to produce it. By this means they think grace is first attained, and men disposed to comply with the external call of the gospel, whereby it is rendered effectual. They sometimes, indeed, use the word 'conversion,' and speak of the power and grace of God in it; and that they may not seem to detract from its glory, they profess to adore and magnify God as its author. But all they say amounts to no more than that nature acts under the influence of common providence. Something, indeed, they ascribe to God; but much less than what we think the scripture does. They say that he has made man an intelligent creature, having a power capable of choosing whatever seems advantageous, or refusing what appears to be destructive to him. Man is hence able, they say, to discern what is his duty and interest; and when his will duly attends to these dictates of his understanding, it has a power inclining it to be influenced thereby, and to embrace whatever overtures are made conducive to his future happiness. They say, farther, that as the understanding and reasoning powers and faculties are often impaired and hindered in their acting, by some accidental inconveniences of nature, such as the temperament of the body, or the diseases to which it is sometimes liable, which affect the mind; these, God, by his powerful providence, removes or protects against, that the work may go on successfully. And as our outward circumstances in the world, give a different turn to our passions, and hinder us from entertaining any inclinations to religion, they suppose that there is a farther hand of providence in ordering the various changes or conditions of life, as to its prosperous or adverse circumstances; whereby a sanguine temper is changed to one which is more melancholy or thoughtful, and more inclined to be afraid of those sins which are likely to be prejudicial; an angry and choleric temper, changed to one which has a greater mixture of meekness and humility. They say, too, that while hinderance may arise from a man's conversing with persons who tempt him to lay aside all thoughts about religion, or who load religion with reproach, in order to make him ashamed to pretend to it, the providence of God so orders circumstances and things as to make these persons unacceptable to him, or to make him disinclined to converse with them. There hence arises a congruity, as they call it, between men's natural dispositions and that grace which they are called by the gospel to exert, when they are persuaded to comply with it,—a congruity without which the overture would be in vain. Again, providence farther performs its part, by overruling some concurring circumstances external to and unthought of by an individual, in casting his lot among those who are able and desirous to persuade him to alter his sentiments in matters of religion; whose industry and zeal for his good, accompanied with their skilfulness in managing persuasive arguments used to convince him, have a great tendency to prevail upon him. He is hence persuaded, they say, to give a hearing to that which before he despised and made the subject of ridicule; and sometimes the motives and inducements which are used, accompanied with a pathetic manner of address in those whose ministry he attends, are very conducive to answer the end attained, namely, his conviction and the altering of his conduct in life,—all which are under the un-

foreseen direction of providence. They add, that there is a kind of internal work in exciting the passions by a general influence upon them, leaving it, notwithstanding, in man's power to determine them with respect to their proper objects ; that as for the will, it still remains free and unbiassed ; but that by this moral suasion, or these rational arguments, it is prevailed upon to comply with that which is for its advantage.

According to this method of accounting for the work of conversion, what the Pelagians attribute to the grace of God, is nothing more than the result of common providence ; and is supposed to act no otherwise than in an objective way. What gives the turn to all is, the influence of moral suasion, whereby men are prevailed on ; but for which, according to the view we have stated, they are beholden to God only as the God of nature. When this is called, by the Pelagians, a display of divine grace, nature and grace are, without scripture warrant, made to signify the same thing. Moreover, as it is plain that all which we have mentioned may be done, and yet persons remain in an unconverted state, and the gospel call be ineffectual, they suppose that there is something to be performed on man's part, which gives a sanction to and completes the work. Accordingly, say they, he must rightly use and improve the power of reasoning which God has given him, by diligently observing and attending to his law ; he must persuade himself that it is highly reasonable to obey it ; he must duly weigh the consequence of his compliance or refusal, and endeavour to affect himself with the consideration of promised rewards and punishments, to excite his diligence or awaken his fears ; he must make use of those motives which are proper to induce him to lead a virtuous life, and, when he is brought to conclude this most eligible, he must add the force of the strongest resolutions, to avoid occasions of sin, perform several necessary duties, and associate himself with those whose conversation and example may induce him to virtue ; he must attend on the word preached, with intenseness of thought, and a disposition to adhere, with the greatest impartiality, to what is recommended to him, as conducive to his future happiness. By these means, say they, he is persuaded ; and thence proceed those acts of grace which afterwards, by being frequently repeated, arrive to a habit ; so that, being brought into a state of conversion, if his acquired habits of goodness be not lost by negligence, stupidity, and impenitence, or by adhering to the temptations of Satan, he is in a fair way to heaven ; which, notwithstanding, he may miss by apostacy, since the work is to be carried on by him, as it was at first begun, by his own conduct.

This account of effectual calling or conversion, supposes it to be little more than a work of common providence. All the grace which the Pelagians seem to own, is nothing more than nature exerting itself under the conduct of those reasoning powers which God has given it. None pretend to deny that our reasoning powers are to be exerted and improved ; or that those arguments which tend to give conviction, and motives to enforce obedience, must be duly attended to. Nor do we deny that there is a kind hand of providence seen in overruling our natural tempers and dispositions, in giving a check to that corruption which is prevalent in us, and in rendering our condition in life, some way or other, conducive to a farther work which God designs to bring about. We assert also, that providence greatly favours us in bringing us under the means of grace, or in casting our lot in places where we have the advantages of the conversation and example of others who are burning and shining lights in their generation. Nor is providence less seen in adapting a suitable word to our condition, or in raising our affections while attending to it. All this, however, falls very far short of effectual calling, as a display of God's power and grace. This work is no more than natural ; while conversion is a supernatural work. In this we may be led by common grace ; but effectual calling is a work of special grace. The effect of this is only a change of life ; but we assert, and have scripture ground for doing so, that there is in conversion a change of heart. This scheme supposes the very principle and spring of grace to be acquired by man's improving his natural powers, under the conduct of God's providence ; whereas we suppose, and shall endeavour to prove under a following head, that it is not acquired, but infused, and is the effect of divine power. This supposes that the work is brought about by moral suasion, and that, while the understanding receives the

arguments which are made use of in an objective way, the will is induced to a compliance, by choosing that which is good, and refusing that which is evil; whereas we assert that the will of man is bowed and subjected to Christ, its enmity overcome, and we are said to be 'made willing in the day of his power.'

But that which bears the greatest share in this work, is, according to the Pelagians, the will and power of man determining itself, by proper motives and arguments, to what is good. This supposes that the will acts freely in the matter. We have here an opportunity to consider the nature of human liberty. Now we do not deny, in general, that man is endowed with a free will, which exerts itself in things of a lower nature than that which we are speaking of; for this is as evident as that he is endowed with an understanding. We shall, therefore, in speaking concerning the liberty of the will of man, consider, first, what are the essential properties of liberty,^u without which an action would cease to be free; and, secondly, how far the power of man's free will may be extended, with a particular view to the matter under our present consideration.

1. As to the nature and essential properties of human liberty, they whose sentiments of free will and grace we are opposing, suppose that it is essential to a free action, that it be performed with indifference, that is, that the will of man should be so equally poised that, while it determines itself to one extreme, it might as well have determined itself to the other. They hence say, that he who loves God freely, might, by a determination of his will, as well have inclined himself to hate him; and that, on the other hand, he who hates God, might, by an act of his will, have determined himself to love him. The balance is supposed to be equal; and it is the method which the person uses to determine his will, which gives a turn to it. They hence infer that those who persevere in grace, which they do freely, may, for the same reason, apostatize. Yea, they proceed farther, at least some of them do, and maintain that our Saviour might have sinned, and consequently that the work of our redemption might have miscarried in his hands; because, according to their notion of liberty, he acted freely in all those exercises of grace which, we suppose, were no less free than they were necessary. From the account they give of liberty, our opponents infer also, that the angels and glorified saints may sin, and so lose the state of blessedness which they are possessed of; otherwise their obedience is not free. These absurdities are so apparently gross, that they who duly weigh them will not easily adopt this notion of liberty. There is another absurdity, which the Pelagians dare not assert; for it would be the greatest blasphemy that could be expressed in words, though it equally flows from their method of explaining the nature of liberty; that either God must not act freely, or else he might act the contrary, with respect to those things in which he acts, like himself, as a God of infinite perfection; and accordingly, if he loves or delights in himself freely, or designs his own glory as the highest end of all that he does, and uses means to bring about those ends which are most conducive to it, wherein his holiness, wisdom, justice, and faithfulness appear, I say, it will follow from their scheme, and I cannot but tremble to mention it, that he might do the contrary; and what is this but to say, that he might cease to be God?

The arguments which they who attempt to support this notion of liberty, insist on, are taken from the ideas which we generally have of a person's acting freely. For instance, if a man performs any of the common actions of life, such as walking, sitting, standing, reading, writing, &c. freely, he may do the contrary. But there is a vast difference between asserting that many of the actions of life are arbitrary or indifferent, so that we might do the contrary, and saying that indifference is essential to liberty; for that which is essential to an action must belong to every individual action of the same kind.^x Thus concerning their notion of liberty, whom we oppose.

The notion of liberty in which we acquiesce is, that its essential property or nature consists in a person's doing a thing without being laid under a natural neces-

^u This is what is generally called the 'formalis ratio' of liberty.

^x We generally say, that whatever is essential to a thing, belongs to it as such. And there is a known rule in logic, 'A quatenus ad omne valet consequentia;' and then the absurd consequences, above-mentioned, would necessarily follow.

sity to do it;^y or doing it of his own accord, without any force laid on him.^z Others express it by a person's doing a thing out of choice, as having the highest reason to determine him to do it.^a This is that notion of liberty which we cannot but approve of.

2. We are now to show how far the power of man's free will may be extended, with a particular view to the matter under our present consideration. Here let it be observed, that the power of man's will extends itself to things within its own sphere, and not above it. All actions and powers of acting, are contained within certain limits, agreeably to the nature and capacity of the agent. Creatures below man cannot put forth rational actions; and man cannot put forth supernatural actions, if he be not made partaker of a divine or spiritual nature, as being endowed with a supernatural principle, such as that which is implanted in regeneration. Consider him as an intelligent creature, and it is agreeable to his nature to put forth free actions, under the conduct and direction of the understanding; but if we consider him as renewed, converted, or effectually called, and acting agreeably to his being so, he is under the influence of a higher principle, which I call 'a divine nature,' according to the phrase which the apostle uses.^b The former supposes no more than the concurrence of common providence, which first gave and then maintains our reasoning faculties; while the latter supposes that we are under the influence of the Spirit, whereby we are enabled to act in a supernatural way, our natures being renewed and disposed so to act. In this, however, we are not divested of the liberty of our wills; but they are improved and enabled to do what before they were averse and disinclined to. That man acts freely in those things which are agreeable to his nature, as an intelligent creature, all will allow. Moreover, we consider that the understanding and the will concur in actions which are free, and that one of these is subservient to the other. For instance, we cannot be said to desire, delight in, choose, or refuse a thing, unless we have some idea of it, as an object which we think meet to be desired or rejected.—It may be farther inquired, whether the will has in itself a power to follow the dictates of the understanding, in things which are agreeable to our nature; and whether it is generally disposed to do this, unless biassed by the passions, inclining and determining it another way. Now this, I think, is not to be denied. But in our present argument, we are to consider the will of man as conversant about things supernatural, and accordingly, must give a different account of Christian liberty from that which is merely human, as before described. The Pelagians will allow what has been said concerning the nature of liberty in general; but the difference between us and them is, that we confine it within its own sphere, while they extend it farther, and apply it to regeneration, effectual calling, and conversion. Now as regards these, the will discovers itself no otherwise than as enslaved to or a servant of sin;^c and the powers and faculties of the soul, with relation to it, are weakened by the prevalence of corruption, so that we are not able to put forth those actions which proceed from a renewed nature, and determine a person to be 'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' or to have put 'on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'—Again, it may be inquired, whether the will necessarily follows the dictates of the understanding, so that the grace of God takes its rise thence. Now, the understanding, indeed, represents things spiritual and heavenly to us, as good and desirable, and worthy of all acceptance, and gives us an undeniable conviction that all the motives used in scripture, to choose and embrace them, are highly reasonable; but yet it does not follow, that the will of man is always overcome by these representations of the understanding.^d The reason

y In this respect divines generally consider liberty as opposed to coercion. But here we must distinguish between a natural coercion and a moral one. Liberty is not opposed to a moral coercion, which is very consistent with it. Thus an honest man cannot allow himself in a vile action; he is under a moral constraint to the contrary; and yet he abstains from sin freely. A believer loves Christ freely, as the apostle Paul certainly did; and yet at the same time, he was under the constraint of the love of Christ; as he himself expresses it, 2 Cor. v. 14.

z This divines generally call 'spontaneity.'

a This some call 'lubentia rationalis.'

b 2 Pet. i. 4.

c This some divines call 'voluntas serva.'

d The question between us and the Pelagians, is not, Whether the will sometimes follows the dictates of the understanding? but, Whether it either always does so? or, if not, Whether that

of this is, the strong propensity and inclination which there is in corrupt nature to sin, which bids defiance to all the arguments and persuasions which are used to the contrary, till we are brought under the influence of a supernatural principle, implanted in the soul in effectual calling.

This leads us farther to inquire, whether, supposing a man has this principle implanted in effectual calling, he then acts freely? or, what is the liberty of man's will, when internally moved and influenced by divine grace? Here we must consider that special grace does not destroy, but improve, the liberty of man's will. When there is a new nature implanted in him, it discovers its energy, and makes a change in all the powers and faculties of the soul. There is a new light shining in the understanding, vastly different from, and superior to, that which it had before. This may truly be called, 'the light of life,'^e not only as it leads to eternal life, but as it proceeds from a principle of spiritual life. It is what we generally call 'saving knowledge;' as it is said, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'^f Now this light in the understanding, being attended with power in the will, the latter is induced to comply with the dictates of the former; not merely as being prevailed on by rational arguments, but as there is a divine power accompanying them. It is not indeed prevailed on without arguments; for the Spirit makes use of the word to persuade, as well as to direct. Though we do not, with the Pelagians, say that the will is overcome only by arguments, as if the victory were owing to our power of reasoning; yet we freely own that we act with judgment, and see the highest reason for what we do. We are enabled to use our reasoning powers, indeed; but these are sanctified by the Spirit, as well as the will renewed; and both concur in order to our receiving and improving the doctrines contained in the gospel. The Spirit of God also removes those rooted prejudices which we had entertained against the way of salvation by Christ. Upon the whole, therefore, the gospel has its use, as it directs and excites our faith. Our reasoning powers and faculties have their use also, as we take in, and are convinced by, what is therein contained. All this, however, would be to no purpose, if there were not a superior power determining the will to a thorough compliance. We do not deny that moral suasion often has a tendency to incline a man to the performance of moral duties; but it is what I choose rather to call evangelical persuasion, or the Spirit of God setting home upon the heart and conscience what is contained in the gospel, which makes it effectual to salvation.

Effectual Calling a Divine Work.

We have thus spoken concerning the nature and extent of human liberty. But as this liberty is not to be assigned as that which renders the gospel call effectual, let it be farther considered that effectual calling is brought about by the almighty power of God. As is observed in this Answer, it is 'a work of God's almighty power and grace.' This is what enhances the excellency and glory of it above all the works of common providence. Yet our saying that it is a divine work, is hardly sufficient to distinguish it from what the Pelagians often call it; by which, however, they mean nothing more than the powerful work of God, as the God of nature and providence. We must consider it as a work of divine power exerting itself in a supernatural way; not only as excluding the agency of creatures from bearing a part in it, but as opposed to those works which are brought about by the moral influence of persuasive arguments, without any change wrought in the will of man.

which hinders it, is not defect in the dictates of the understanding? Accordingly, they speak of the dictates of the understanding as practical, and not merely speculative, and with a particular application to ourselves. They also consider the will as having been before in some suspense; but that dictate of the understanding which it follows, is the last, after mature deliberation; and it is supposed to have compared things together; and therefore presents a thing, not only as good, but more eligible than any thing else, which they call a compared dictate of the understanding; and by this means the will is persuaded to a compliance. But though this may be true in many instances which are natural, daily experience proves that it does not hold good with respect to things divine and supernatural.

^e John viii. 12.

^f Chap. xvii. 3.

In this sense we understand effectual calling to be a work of God's almighty power. That it may appear to be so, let it be premised, that it is not inconsistent with God's dealing with men as intelligent creatures, endowed with liberty of will, to exert this power; for special providence or efficacious grace does no more destroy man's natural powers, by its internal influence enabling and exciting him to do what is supernaturally good, than common providence being conversant about the free actions of men, makes them cease to be free,—only the former exerts itself in a different and superior way, producing effects much more glorious and excellent. This being supposed, we shall, without pretending fully to explain the manner of the divine agency, which is principally known by its effects, endeavour to show that effectual calling is, in a way of eminence, the work of divine power, as distinguished from other works which are, in their kind, the effects of power in a natural way. We shall next observe what effects are produced by it, and in what order. We shall then consider it as it is, in a peculiar manner, attributed to the Spirit of God, and also show that it is a wonderful display of his grace. We shall farther consider this divine power as irresistible, and consequently such as cannot but be effectual to produce what it is designed to bring about. And finally, we shall say something concerning the season in which this is done; which is called 'God's accepted time.'

I. Effectual calling is eminently a work of divine power. For the proof of this, we have not only many express texts of scripture which sufficiently establish it, but we may appeal to the experience of those who are made partakers of this grace. If they compare their former and present state, they may easily perceive in themselves that there is such a change wrought in them as is contrary to the inclinations of corrupt nature,—a change in which the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills has been subdued, and such effects produced in them as they never experienced before. And the manner in which these effects have been produced, as well as the consequences of them, gives them a proof of the agency of God in the change, and of the glory of his power exerted; so that they who deny that effectual calling is eminently a work of divine power, must be unacquainted with themselves, or not duly observe that which carries its own evidence with it.

But we shall take our proofs principally from scripture. There we have an account of the beginning of this work, which is styled 'the new birth.' In this we are said to be made 'partakers of the divine nature';^g that is, a nature which is produced by divine power. We are also said to be 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'^h The gospel, which is the instrument he makes use of in calling effectually, is styled 'the rod of his strength.'ⁱ The effect of it is ascribed to the 'revelation of his arm.'^k The season in which this is done, is called 'the day of his power.'^l And the gospel itself is, by a metonymy, called 'his power.'^m The cross of Christ is also, when preached and made effectual for conversion, styled 'the power of God.'ⁿ Moreover, the progress of the work of grace is ascribed to 'the power of God.'^o It is this power which 'keeps' those who are effectually called 'through faith unto salvation.'^p That the power may appear to be extraordinary, the apostle uses an uncommon emphasis of expression, when he calls it 'the exceeding greatness of his power,' and 'the working of his mighty power';^q which words^r can hardly be translated without losing something of their force and beauty. Indeed, there is not an expression used in scripture to signify the efficacy of divine power, which exceeds, or, I may say, equals them. That the apostle may appear to speak of the power more strongly, he, in the following words, represents it as being no less than 'that power which wrought in Christ, when God raised him from the dead.'—Let me add, that something to the same purpose may be inferred from those metaphorical expressions by which conversion is set forth. Thus it is called 'a creation.' When we are made partakers of this privilege, we are said to 'be created in righteousness and true holiness.'^s The apostle seems to compare it with the creation of man at first after the image of God, which consisted

^g 2 Pet. i. 4.

^l Psal. cx. 3.

^o 2 Thess. i. 11.

^r Το ὑπερβαλλόν μεγαλόν της δυναμειως αυτου, κατα την ενεργειαν του κρατους της ισχυους αυτου.

^s Eph. iv. 24.

^h John i. 13.

^m 1 Cor. i. 18; Rom. i. 16.

^p 1 Pet. i. 5.

ⁱ Psal. cx. 2.

^q Eph. i. 19, 20.

^k Isa. liii. 1.

ⁿ 1 Cor. i. 24.

principally in righteousness and true holiness. He, accordingly, considers this image as restored when a principle of grace is implanted, whereby we are again disposed to the exercise of righteousness and holiness. Elsewhere, also, he says, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk in them.'^t Here he supposes that this creating power must be exerted before we can put forth good works; so that it can be nothing less than the power of God. Nor would it have been styled 'a creation,' if it had not been a supernatural work; so that it is, in that respect, more glorious than many other effects of the divine power.—Conversion is styled, also, 'a resurrection from the dead.' Thus the apostle says, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.'^u In this respect, it certainly exceeds the power of men. A physician by his skill may mend a crazy constitution, or recover it from the confines of death; but to raise the dead exceeds the limits of finite power. This mode of speaking our Saviour makes use of to signify the conversion or effectual call of sinners, when he says, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.'^x He had, in the preceding verse, been speaking of those 'having eternal life,' and 'not coming into condemnation, and being passed from death to life,' who hear his words and believe; and then it follows, that 'the hour is coming,' that is, the time is near at hand when the Spirit shall be poured forth, and the gospel-dispensation be begun, and it 'now is,' in some degree, namely, in those who were converted by his ministry, 'when the dead shall hear his voice and live,' or pass from a state of spiritual death to life, as a means for their attaining eternal life. This view is much more agreeable to the context, than to conclude, as some do to evade the force of this argument, that, in the words 'now is,' our Saviour speaks concerning some who were then, or should thereafter be, raised from the dead in a miraculous manner; and that 'the hour is coming,' refers to the general resurrection. But this seems not to be the sense of the text; because our Saviour, in a following verse, supposes his hearers to be astonished at the doctrine, as though it was too great an instance of power for him to implant a principle of spiritual life in dead sinners; and therefore he proves his assertion from his raising the dead at the last day: 'Marvel not, for the hour is coming,' that is, at the end of the world, 'when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice.'^y This cannot well agree with understanding Christ's raising the dead to refer to the general resurrection; for that would represent him as answering their objection, or putting a stop to their wonder at what he had said, by asserting the same thing in other words. If, however, you suppose the dead 'hearing his voice,' to imply a spiritual resurrection, and 'the dead being raised out of their graves,' to be an argument to convince his hearers that his power was sufficient to bring about this great effect, there is much more beauty in the expression, and strength in the reasoning, than to understand the passage otherwise.—This is so plain a proof of the argument we are endeavouring to defend, that nothing needs be added. However, I cannot but mention another scripture, in which our Saviour says, 'No man can come to me except the Father draw him.'^z Here Christ, by 'coming to him,' does not mean attending on his ministry, which did not require any power to induce them to it; but 'believing on him,' so as to 'have everlasting life.' In this sense, 'coming to him' is often understood in the gospels;^a and it is the immediate consequence of effectual calling. Now, when our Saviour says that 'no man can' thus 'come to him' without being 'drawn by the Father,' we may understand what he means by what is said in a following verse, namely, their being 'taught of God,' and having 'heard and learned of the Father.'^b Such, says he, 'come unto me.' Now, this 'teaching' certainly implies more than giving a rule of faith contained in divine revelation; for Christ is not here, as elsewhere, proving the necessity of divine revelation, but is speaking concerning its saving efficacy; and none can deny that many have been objectively taught and instructed by the word, who have not come to Christ, or believed in him to everlasting life. The words are a quotation from the prophets, to whom he refers, and who intimate that they should be 'all taught

^t Eph. ii. 10.
^z John vi. 44.

^u Chap. ii. 1, 5.
^a Ver. 47.

^x John v. 25.
^b Ver. 45.

^y John v. 28.

of God.' But this teaching certainly implies more than an objective teaching and instructing; for in this sense they, having divine revelation, were always taught of God. What the prophet Isaiah mentions, when he foretells this matter, is a special privilege; as appears by his connecting it with the great peace which its subjects should have, or the confluence of saving blessings which should attend it.^c The prophet Jeremiah, who speaks to the same purpose, says, 'They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them;' ^d that is, not only shall they have an objective revelation, or that which some call moral suasion, but this shall be made effectual to their salvation. And in order to its being so, God promises that he would 'put his law in the inward part, and write it in the heart,' and that he would 'give them a new heart,' and 'put a new spirit within them,' and hereby 'cause them to walk in his statutes.'^e The teaching, therefore, is not merely a rectifying of some mistakes to which they are liable, but a producing in them of something which they had not before; not building upon the old foundation, but laying a new one, and so working a change in the powers and faculties of the soul. And as they formerly were obdurate and hardened in sin, he promises to 'take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh,' and by his 'word,' which is compared to 'a hammer,' to 'break the rock in pieces.'^f This is certainly a work of power. But that it is so, will farther appear from what follows in considering the work itself.

II. We are thus led to show what effects are produced by the power of God, when we are effectually called.

1. The first step which he is pleased to take in this work, is his implanting a principle of spiritual life and grace, which is absolutely necessary for our attaining to, or receiving advantage by, the external call of the gospel. This is generally styled regeneration, or the new birth, or, as in the scripture just referred to, 'a new heart.' If it be inquired, what we are to understand by this principle, we answer that, as principles are known only by the effects they produce, springs of acting, by the actions themselves, we must be content with the description, that it is something wrought in the heart of man, whereby he is habitually and prevailingly biassed and inclined to what is good. In virtue of it, he freely, readily, and willingly chooses those things which tend to the glory of God; and refuses, abhors, and flees from what is contrary to it. As this effect more immediately concerns the understanding, whereby it is enabled to discern in a spiritual way the things which God reveals in the gospel, it is styled his 'shining in the heart,^g to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory,' or his giving 'an eye to see, and an ear to hear.'^h As it respects the will, it contains a power whereby it is disposed and enabled to yield the obedience of faith, to whatever God is pleased to reveal to us as a rule of duty; so that we are made willing in the day of his power. And as it respects the affections, they are all inclined to run in a right channel, to desire, delight, and rejoice in every thing which is pleasing to God, and to flee from every thing which is provoking to him. This is that whereby a dead sinner is made alive, and so enabled to put forth living actions.

Concerning this principle of grace, let it be observed that it is infused, and not acquired. The first principle or spring of good actions, may as truly be supposed to be infused into us as Christians, as the principle of reasoning is said to be infused into us as men. None ever supposed that the natural power of reasoning may be acquired, though a greater facility or degree of it is gradually attained. In the same way, that power whereby we are enabled to put forth supernatural acts of grace, which we call a principle of grace, must be supposed to be implanted in us; for, were it acquired, we could not, properly speaking, be said to be born of God. I am hence obliged to infer, that the regenerating act, or the implanting of this principle of grace, which, in the order of nature at least, is antecedent to any act of grace put forth by us, is the immediate effect of the power of God. This none who speak of regeneration as a divine work, pretend to deny. I cannot but conclude, therefore, that it is wrought in us without the instrumentality of th:

c Isa. liv. 13.
g 2 Cor. iv. 6.

d Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.
h Deut. xxix. 4.

e Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

f Jer. xxiii. 29.

word, or of any of the ordinary means of grace. My reason for thinking so is, that it is necessary, from the nature of the thing, to our receiving or improving the word of God, or reaping any saving advantage by it, that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith. Now, to say that this is done by the word, is, in effect, to assert that the word produces the principle, and the principle gives efficacy to the word; which seems, to me, little less than arguing in a circle. The word cannot profit, unless it be mixed with faith; faith cannot be put forth, unless it proceed from a principle of grace implanted; therefore this principle of grace is not produced by the word. We may as well suppose that the presenting of a beautiful picture before a man who is blind can enable him to see, or that the violent motion of a withered hand can produce strength for action, as we can suppose that the presenting of the word, in an objective way, is the instrument whereby God produces that internal principle by which we are enabled to embrace it. Nor would this so well agree with the idea of its being a new creature, or of our being 'created unto good works;' for then it ought rather to be said, we are created by faith, which is a good work. This is, in effect, to say that the principle of grace is produced by the instrumentality of that which supposes its being implanted, and that it is the result and consequence of it.—I am sorry that I am obliged, in this assertion, to appear at least to oppose what has been maintained by many divines of great worth; who have, in all other respects, explained the doctrine of regeneration agreeably to the mind and will of God, and the analogy of faith.ⁱ It may be the principal difference between this explanation and theirs is, that they speak of regeneration in a large sense, as including, not merely the implanting of the principle, but the exciting of it, and do not sufficiently distinguish between the principle as implanted and as deduced into action; for, I readily own that the latter is by the instrumentality of the word, though I cannot think the former so. Or it may be, they consider the principle as exerted; while I consider it as created or wrought in us, and therefore can no more conclude that the new creation is wrought by an instrument, than I can that the first creation of all things was.

I am ready to conjecture that what leads many divines into this way of thinking, is the sense in which they understand the words of the apostle: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;'^k and elsewhere, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.'^l But this language respects not so much the implanting of the principle of grace, as our being enabled to act from that principle. It is as if the inspired writers had said, 'He hath made us believers, or induced us to love and obey him by the word of truth.' This supposes a principle of grace to have been implanted; otherwise the word of truth would never have produced these effects. Regeneration may be taken, not only for our being made alive to God, or created unto good works, but for our putting forth living actions, proceeding from that principle which is implanted in the soul. I am far from denying that faith and all other graces are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word; and it is in this sense that some who treat on this subject explain their sentiments, when they speak of being born again by the word. I persuade myself, therefore, that I differ from them only in the acceptance of words, and not in the substance of the doctrine they maintain.^m [See Note H, page 77.]

2. The principle of grace being implanted, the acts of grace in those who are adult, immediately follow. There is, in other words, a change of our behaviour, a renovation of our lives and actions, which may properly be called conversion. Having explained what we mean by regeneration, it is now necessary to consider how it differs from conversion. Here I shall take leave to transcribe a few passages from the excellent divine just mentioned. "Regeneration is a spiritual change;

ⁱ See Charnock, vol. ii. pages 220, 221, &c. and Cole on Regeneration.

^k 1 Pet. i. 23.

^l James i. 16.

^m See Charnock, vol. ii. page 232, who, speaking concerning its being an instrument appointed by God for this purpose, says, "God hath made a combination between hearing and believing; so that believing comes not without hearing;" and while he infers from this, that the principle of grace is implanted, by hearing and believing the word, he must be supposed to understand it, concerning the principle deduced into action, and not concerning the implanting of the principle itself.

conversion is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred ; conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given us a principle to turn ; conversion is our actual turning. In the covenant, the new heart, and God's putting the Spirit into them, is distinguished from their walking in his statutes, from the first step we take in the way of God, and is set down as the cause of our motion. In renewing us, God gives us a power ; in converting us, he excites that power. Men are naturally dead, and have a stone upon them ; regeneration is a rolling away the stone from the heart, and a raising to newness of life ; and then conversion is as natural to a regenerate man, as motion is to a living body. A principle of activity will produce action. The first reviving us is wholly the act of God, without any concurrence of the creature ; but, after we are revived, we do actively and voluntarily live in his sight. Regeneration is the motion of God in the creature ; conversion is the motion of the creature to God, by virtue of that first principle. From this principle all the acts of believing, repenting, mortifying, quickening, do spring. In all these a man is active ; in the other, he is merely passive.ⁿ This is what we may call the second step, which God takes in effectual calling ; and it is brought about by the instrumentality of the word. The word before this was preached to little or no purpose, or, it may be, was despised, rejected, and disregarded ; but now a man is enabled to see a beauty and a glory in it, all the powers and faculties of his soul being under the influence of the spiritual life implanted in regeneration, and inclined to yield a ready and cheerful obedience. This work is gradual and progressive, and as such, is called the work of sanctification,—of which more shall be said under a following Answer ;^o and it is attended with repentance unto life, and all other graces which accompany salvation. In this respect we are drawn to Christ by his word and Spirit ; or, by his Spirit making use of his word, our minds are savingly enlightened, our wills renewed and determined to what is good ; so that, as it is expressed in the Answer we are explaining, we are made willing and able freely to answer the call of God, and to accept of and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in the gospel.

The first thing in which that change which is wrought in effectual calling manifests itself, is our understanding being enlightened to receive the truths revealed to us in the word of God. Accordingly, we see things with a new and different light,—behold a greater beauty, excellency, and glory in divine things, than ever we did before. We are also led into ourselves, and convinced of sin and misery, concluding ourselves to be, by nature, in a lost and undone condition. The soul then sees the glory of Christ, the greatness of his love who came to seek and save those that were lost, and who now appears precious, as he is said to be to those who believe. Then the will—being determined or enabled so to do, by the Spirit of God exciting the principle of grace which he had implanted—accepts of Christ on his own terms ; and the affections all centre in him, and desire to derive all spiritual blessings from him. Thus the work of grace is begun in effectual calling, which is afterwards carried on in sanctification.

As we are here considering the beginning of the work of grace in effectual calling, I cannot but take notice of a question which frequently occurs on this subject, namely, Whether man, in the first moment of effectual calling, that is, in regeneration, be merely passive, though active in every thing which follows ? That he is so, we cannot but affirm, not only against the Pelagians, but against others whose method of treating the doctrine of divine grace seems to agree with theirs. Here, that we may obviate a popular objection, usually brought against our assertion, as if we argued that God dealt with men as if they were machines, and not endowed with understanding or will, let it be observed that we consider the subjects of this grace no otherwise than as intelligent creatures, capable of being internally excited and disposed to what is good, or else God would never work this principle in them. Nor do we suppose, however men are said to be passive in the first moment in which this principle is implanted, that they are so afterwards ; but we say that they are enabled to act under the divine influence. The case is similar to the literal

ⁿ See Charnock on Regeneration, vol. ii. pages 70, 71.

^o See Quest. lxxv.

creation of Adam. When his soul was created, it could not be said to be active in its own creation, and in the implanting of those powers which were concreated with it; yet it was active, or those powers exerted themselves, immediately after it was created. This is the state of the question we are now debating. We cannot but maintain, therefore, that men do not concur in the implanting of the principle of grace; for then they would be active in being created unto good works. But these are the result, and not the cause of that power which is infused into them, in order to their being produced. The doctrine we have stated is sufficiently evident, not only from the impotency of corrupt nature as to what is good, but from its utter aversion to it, and from the work being truly and properly divine, or, as was formerly observed, the effect of almighty power. This is not a controversy of late date; but has been either defended or opposed, since the time of Augustine and Pelagius. Many volumes have been written concerning the aids and assistances of divine grace in the work of conversion. The schoolmen were divided in their sentiments about it, as they adhered to or receded from Augustine's doctrine. Both sides seem to allow that the grace of God affords some assistance; but the main thing in debate, is, Whether the grace of God bears only one part in this work, and the will of man the other; like two persons lifting at the same burden, and carrying it between them? Some have allowed that the divine concurrence is necessary, and yet have not been willing to own that man bears no part in this work, or that 'it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'^p This the apostle asserts in so plain terms, that the most known sense of his words cannot well be evaded. Indeed, were it otherwise, it could hardly be said, that 'we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; a saying which, though immediately applied to ministers, is certainly, by a parity of reason, applicable to all Christians.'^q Nor would it be, in all respects, true, that we are 'born of God,' or that we, who formerly were dead in sin, are raised to a spiritual life, or made, with respect to the principle of spiritual actions, new creatures; all which is done in regeneration.

We might also take occasion, under this head, to notice what we often meet with in practical discourses and sermons, concerning preparatory works, or previous dispositions, which facilitate and lead to the work of conversion. Some assert that we must do what we can, and, by using our reasoning powers and faculties, endeavour to convert or turn ourselves; and that then God will do the rest, or finish the work which we have begun. Many things are often considered as the steps which men may take in the reformation of their lives,—such as abstaining from gross enormities which they may have been guilty of, thinking on their ways, observing the tendency of their present course of life, and setting before themselves proper arguments which may induce them to repent and believe; and then, it is alleged, they may be said to have prepared themselves for the grace of God, the bestowal of which upon them will follow. It is added that, if there be any thing remaining, which is out of their power, God has engaged to give success to their endeavours; so that he will bring them into a state of regeneration and conversion.—Now, this method of accounting for the work of grace is liable to many exceptions; particularly as it supposes man to be the first mover in his own conversion, and the divine energy to be dependent upon our conduct. For the contrary is agreeable, not only to scripture, but to the divine perfections, as well as to the doctrine we have been maintaining as to effectual calling being, in the most proper sense, a divine work.—But that we may impartially consider this matter, and set what some call a preparatory work in a just light, let it be observed that preparatory works must either be considered as good in all those circumstances which are necessary to denominate them good, particularly they must proceed from a good principle, that is to say, a principle of regeneration; or else they are only such works as are materially good, which many perform who are never brought into a state of conversion. Or if, on the other hand, they are supposed to proceed from a principle of regeneration, they are works, from the nature of the thing, not preparatory to the first grace, but rather consequent upon it.—Again, it is one thing to assert that it is our duty to

perform all those works which some call preparatory for conversion,—such as meditation, attendance on ordinances, duly weighing those arguments or motives which should lead us to repentance and the exercise of all other graces ; and another thing to say that every one who performs these duties shall certainly have regenerating grace. Or, it is one thing to apply ourselves to the performance of those duties, as far as it is in our own power, and, at the same time, to wait, pray, and hope for success to attend them ; and another thing to assert that success shall always attend them, as if God had laid himself under an obligation to give special grace to those who, in this way, improve that which is common. For the contrary to this may be observed in many instances ; and when we have done all, we must conclude that the grace of God, if he is pleased to give success to our endeavours, is free and sovereign.—Further, they who say that if we do all we can, God will do the rest, advance very little to support their argument ; since there is no one who can pretend that he has done what he could. May we not suppose, too, that God, in a judicial way, as punishing us for the many sins we commit, may deny us success ? How can it be said, then, that success will necessarily follow ? When we perform any of those duties which some call preparatory to conversion, they are to be considered as the Spirit's preparing his own way, rather than as corrupt nature's preparing itself for grace. We are far from denying that there is a beautiful order in the divine dispensations. The Spirit of God first convinces of sin ; and then shows the convinced sinner where his help is to be had, and enables him to close with Christ by faith. He first shows the soul its own corruption and nothingness ; and then leads him to see Christ's fulness, or that all his salvation is reposed in his hands, and enables him to believe in him to the saving of the soul. One of these works, indeed, prepares the way for the other. None of them, however, can be said to prepare the way for regeneration ; which is the work of the Spirit of God, and without which no other can be said to be a saving work.

It is objected that there are several scriptures which seem to speak of common grace, as being preparatory for special. Thus the scribe, mentioned in the gospel, who expressed himself 'discreetly,' in asserting that, 'to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices,' is said to have been 'not far from the kingdom of God.'^r Elsewhere, too, we are exhorted 'to ask' and 'to seek ;' and a promise is annexed, that 'it shall be given us, and we shall find.'^s In another place, we are commanded 'to turn at God's reproof ;' and it is said, 'he will pour out his Spirit' unto us, 'and make known his words unto us.'^t There are also several other scriptures, in which superadded grace is connected with duty enjoined ; which duty is supposed to be in our own power, and to be preparatory for it.—Now, as to the first of these scriptures, in which our Saviour tells the scribe that he was 'not far from the kingdom of God,' he intends nothing else but that the profession he made, which he calls his 'answering discreetly,' was not very remote from that which was made by those who were the subjects of his kingdom. It is the doctrine the scribe mentions which Christ commends. It must hence not be inferred that he had regard to his state, as if his inward temper of mind, or moral conduct of life, were such as more immediately disposed him for a state of grace, so that he was hovering between a state of unregeneracy and conversion.—As for the instance in which persons are supposed to prepare themselves by prayer for that grace which God gives in answer to it, the meaning is not that he has obliged himself to give whatever they ask for relating to their salvation. Neither the scripture referred to, nor any other to the same purpose, can have this meaning, unless it be understood of the prayer of faith, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This, however, supposes regenerating grace, and therefore, is foreign to the argument in which man is considered as preparing himself for the grace of God, and not as expecting farther degrees of grace, upon his being inclined by the Spirit of God to seek them.—As for God's engaging 'to give the Spirit,' and to 'make known his words,' to those who 'turn at his reproof ;' this, I conceive, contains nothing else but a promise of the Spirit, to carry on the work of grace in all those in whom it is begun. Though 'turning,' in scripture, is some-

^r Mark xii. 33, 34.

^s Matt. vii. 7.

^t Prov. i. 23.

times taken for external reformation, which is in our own power, as it is our indispensable duty ; yet, whenever a promise of saving blessings is, as in this scripture, annexed to it, it is to be understood as denoting the grace of repentance. If it be said that this is God's gift, and therefore cannot be the subject of an exhortation, it may be replied that saving grace is often represented, in scripture, as our act or duty ; in order to the performance of which we ought to say, as the church is represented as doing, ' Turn thou me, and I shall be turned ;'^u that is, ' I shall return unto thee with my whole heart, and not feignedly.'^x—The same reply might be given to the objector's sense of several other scriptures brought to maintain the doctrine of preparatory works performed by us, as necessarily inferring our obtaining the special grace of God. But I shall close this head with a few hints taken from the excellent divine formerly mentioned. " Man cannot prepare himself for the new birth. He hath, indeed, a subjective capacity for grace, above any other creature in the inferior world ; and this is a kind of natural preparation, which other creatures have not,—a capacity, in regard of the powers of the soul, though not in respect of the present disposition of them. He hath an understanding to know, and, when it is enlightened, to know God's law,—a will to move and run, and, when enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commandments ; so that he stands in an immediate capacity to receive the life of grace upon the breath and touch of God, which a stone doth not ; for in this it is necessary that rational faculties should be put as a foundation of spiritual motions. Though the soul is thus capable, as a subject, to receive the grace of God, yet it is not therefore capable, as an agent, to prepare itself for it, or produce it. It is capable to receive the truths of God ; but, as the heart is stony, it is incapable to receive the impressions of those truths. Though some things which man may do by common grace, may be said to be preparations ; yet they are not formally so,—as that there is an absolute, causal connection between such preparations and regeneration. They are not disposing causes of grace. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, not of action from the soul. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the first infusion of the divine nature. If there were any thing in the subject that was the cause of it, the tenderest and softest dispositions would be wrought upon ; and the most intelligent men would soonest receive the gospel. Though we see them sometimes renewed, yet many times the roughest tempers are seized upon by grace. Though morality seems to set men at a greater nearness to the kingdom of God ; yet, with all its own strength, it cannot bring it into the heart, unless the Spirit open the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man farther from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent. And other operations upon the soul, which seem to be nearer preparations, such as convictions, &c., do not infer grace ; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not planted with any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit. The increase depends upon God."^y Thus this learned author, who also proves that there is no obligation on God by any thing which may look like a preparation on man ; and adds that, if any preparations were our own, and were pure, which they are not, yet they cannot oblige God to give supernatural grace.

III. We are now led to consider that this work is, in a peculiar manner, attributed to the Spirit of God ; the only moving cause of it being his grace. That the Spirit is the author of this work, is not to be proved by experience, as the impressions of divine power in it are ; but it is to be proved by scripture ; and the scripture is very express on the subject. Thus, when God promises to ' give a new heart, to take away the heart of stone, and to give an heart of flesh, and to cause his people to walk in his statutes,'^z he tells them that, in order to his doing so, he would ' put his Spirit within them.' Elsewhere they are said to have ' purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.'^a Our Saviour also asserts the necessity of our being ' born of the Spirit,'^b in order to our entering into the kingdom of God. So that, from these and several other scriptures which might be

^u Jer. xxxi. 18. ^x Jer. iii. 10. ^y See Charnock on Regeneration, vol. ii. pages 147, 148, &c.
^z Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. ^a 1 Pet. i. 22. ^b John iii. 5.

referred to, it appears that effectual calling is the internal powerful work of the Holy Ghost.^c

It is objected by some, that this doctrine savours of enthusiasm; since it supposes that there is no difference between the Spirit's internal influences and his inspiration; and to pretend to this, now that the miraculous dispensation which was in the apostle's days has ceased, is vain and enthusiastic.—But the charge of enthusiasm is very unjustly deduced from this doctrine; for we must distinguish between the extraordinary and the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost. The former is allowed by all to have now ceased; so that they who pretend to it are liable to this charge. But it is a very great dishonour cast upon the Holy Ghost to deny his powerful influence or agency in the work of grace; and it renders the present condition of the church, in a very material circumstance, so much inferior to what it was of old, that it is incapable of attaining salvation,—unless it could be proved that salvation might be attained without the divine energy.—But, that we may farther reply to the objection, let it be considered that the Spirit's influence, as subservient to the work of grace, is evidently distinguished from inspiration. The latter was a peculiar honour conferred upon some persons, who either were to transmit to the church a rule of faith by the immediate dictates of the Holy Ghost, or were favoured with inspiration to answer some extraordinary ends which could not be attained without it, namely, their being furnished with wisdom, as well as courage and boldness, to maintain the cause which they were not otherwise furnished to defend, against the opposition that it met with from their persecuting and malicious enemies, that so it might not suffer through their weakness. Hence our Saviour bids his disciples 'not take thought what they should say,' when brought before rulers, &c.; and promises that 'the Spirit should speak in them.'^d In some other particular instances, especially in the church at Corinth, we read that when ministers had not those advantages to qualify themselves to preach the gospel which they afterwards were favoured with, some had this extraordinary gift, so that they spake by the Spirit, but this was only conferred occasionally, and for some special reasons. Hence those scriptures which speak of the influences of the Spirit which were more common, and immediately subservient to the work of grace in the souls of those who were the subjects of them, were, at that time, the same with those that we are pleading for, and were designed to continue so in the church in all ages. Thus, when persons are said 'through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body,'^e the language does not respect any extraordinary dispensation which they were then under; since it is the duty of all men, in all ages, without the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body; so that we may expect this powerful energy as well as they, or else our condition would be very deplorable.—Besides, we never find that extraordinary gifts were immediately subservient to the subduing of corruption, or, at least, that every one who had them did mortify sin, and so appear to be internally sanctified. Yet, to mortify sin, is a character of those who are under sanctifying influences; and not to have these influences, determines a person to be in an unregenerate state, or 'to live after the flesh,' and so to be liable to death.^f No one can suppose that when the apostle, in the foregoing verse, says, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,' he means, 'If ye are not under inspiration, ye shall die, as living after the flesh.' His reasoning, however, is strong and conclusive, if we understand the divine influence of which he speaks, as what is distinct from inspiration, and consequently a privilege necessary for the beginning and carrying on of the work of grace, and so belonging to believers in all ages.—Again, when the Spirit is said 'to help our infirmities'^g in prayer, is not prayer as much a duty now as it was when they had extraordinary gifts? and ought we not to hope for the assistance of the Spirit in all ages? The Spirit's

c When we speak of effectual calling being the work of the Spirit, the agency of the Father and Son is not excluded; since the divine power by which all effects are produced, belongs to the divine essence, which is equally predicated of all the persons in the Godhead. But when any work is peculiarly attributed to the Spirit, it implies that his personal glory is demonstrated thereby, agreeably to what is elsewhere called the economy of the divine persons. See this farther explained in Sect. 'The Economy of the Persons in the Godhead,' under Quest. ix, x, xi.

d Matt. x. 18—20.

e Rom. viii. 13.

f Ver. 12.

g Ver. 26.

help, therefore, is not confined to the age when there was a miraculous dispensation, or extraordinary inspiration.—Further, when it is said, ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,’^h can we suppose that none were the sons of God but such as had extraordinary gifts? Does not this privilege belong to us as well as to them? Now, if we are the sons of God, as well as they, we have this evidence of our being so, that we are ‘led by the Spirit of God;’ though we pretend not to be led by him as a Spirit of inspiration.—We may add, that the apostle elsewhere speaks of some who were ‘sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance.’ These are described as ‘trusting in Christ, after they had heard the word of salvation,’ and ‘believing in him.’ⁱ But this character belongs to the church in all ages; so that the ‘sealing’ spoken of is not a privilege confined to those who had the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but one which belongs to believers as such.—Moreover, it is said, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’^k Therefore some persons may, in a way of self-examination, know themselves to be the children of God, by the witness of the Spirit which is common to all believers; they may do so without pretending to be inspired, which would be to know this matter without the concurring testimony of our own spirits.—Many things of a similar nature might be observed concerning other scriptures which are generally brought to prove that believers, in our day, though they pretend not to the Spirit of inspiration, are made partakers of the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost. But what we have stated is a sufficient Answer to the objection we have been considering.

It is farther objected, that, if the Spirit does work internally in the souls of men, we are not to suppose that he works a change in their wills, but only that he presents objects to them which they, by their own power, improve and make use of for their good; even as a finite spirit may suggest good or bad thoughts, without disposing us to comply with them; or, as the devil is said to work in men, and is called, ‘The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.’^l But an objective influence, properly speaking, is no influence at all; much less is it becoming the dignity of the Holy Ghost, to say that he has no more an hand in the work of conversion than that which a mere creature might have. I will not deny that the Greek word,^m which signifies energy, or internal working, is sometimes taken for such a kind of influence as is not properly the effect of power, as in the instance stated in the objection. Yet, let it be considered that in other instances the same word is often used, in senses very different, when applied to God and the creature; the word, in itself, being indeterminate, while the application of it so determines the meaning as to leave no doubt as to the sense of it. Thus, when ‘to make,’ ‘form,’ or ‘produce,’ is applied to God, and the thing made, formed, or produced, is represented as a display of his almighty power which exceeds the limits of finite power, the sense is determined to be very different from making, forming, or producing, when applied to men, acting in their own sphere. So the apostle speaks of ‘building,’ in a very different sense, as applied to God and the creature, which no one is at a loss to understand: ‘Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.’ⁿ Now, to apply this to our present purpose, we do not deny that a finite spirit has an energy in an objective way; but when the same word is applied to God’s manner of acting, and, as was formerly observed, is used to denote a display of his almighty power, producing a change in the soul, and not only persuading but enabling a man to perform good works, from a principle of spiritual life implanted, it may easily be understood as having a very different sense from the same word, when applied to the internal agency of a finite spirit. The objection in question, therefore, does not overthrow the argument we are maintaining.

It is farther objected against the illustration of the powerful work of the Spirit from a person’s being raised from the dead, that this implies nothing supernatural, or out of the power of man; since the apostle says, ‘Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.’^o If arising from the

^h Rom. viii. 14.
^m *Energia*.

ⁱ Eph. i. 13, 14.
ⁿ Heb. iii. 4.

^k Rom. viii. 16.
^o Eph. v. 14.

^l Eph. ii. 2.

dead, it is said, be the effect of almighty power, when applied to the work of grace, it seems preposterous for this 'arising from the dead' to be recommended as our duty; and if it be not a work of almighty power, those scriptures which illustrate effectual calling by the resurrection of the dead, are nothing to the argument for which they have been brought. Now, some suppose that its being assigned as a matter of duty for sinners to rise from the dead, does not infer that their doing so is in their own power; but that it signifies only that none can expect eternal life except those who rise from the death of sin. Accordingly, as the promise here mentioned, relating to our 'having light,' is said to be 'Christ's gift;' so the power to perform that duty which is inseparably connected with it, namely, 'rising from the dead,' is to be sought for at his hand. But if this Answer be not reckoned sufficient, I see no absurdity in supposing that the two expressions, 'awake, thou that sleepest,' and 'arise from the dead,' import the same thing. Sleep is, as it were, the image of death, and, by a metaphorical way of speaking, may be here called death; and if so, the apostle commands believers to awake out of their carnal security, or shake off their stupid frames, as they expect the light of eternal life. Though, however, it be taken in this sense here; yet when we meet with the words 'quickened,' or 'raised from the dead,' elsewhere, they may be understood in a different sense, as denoting the implanting of a principle of grace in regeneration, as will appear by the context. Thus when God is said to 'quicken those who were dead in trespasses and sins, who walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath;' and to do this with a design to show 'the exceeding riches of his grace, and kindness towards them;' and, in consequence, to work that faith which accompanies salvation, and which is not of themselves, but is his gift; when God is said to do these things in our being 'quickened or raised from the dead,' the expressions certainly argue more than a stupid believer's awaking from the carnal security which he is under, who is supposed to have a principle of spiritual life, whereby he may be enabled so to do.

It is also objected to what has been said as to effectual calling being a work of divine power, that those scriptures which speak of it as such, denote nothing else but the power of working miracles; whereby they to whom the gospel was preached were induced to believe. Thus, when the apostle says, 'My preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,'^p his meaning is alleged to be that the doctrines he preached were confirmed, and the truth of them demonstrated, by the power of the Holy Ghost enabling him to work miracles. Again, the words, 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,'^q are alleged to mean that the gospel was not only preached, but confirmed by miracles; and the words, 'Our gospel came to you in power and in the Holy Ghost,'^r are paraphrased,—'The gospel which we preach, was confirmed by the power and miraculous works of the Holy Ghost;' which, say the objectors, has no reference to the internal efficacious influences of the Spirit put forth in effectual calling.—Now, though we often read that the gospel was confirmed by miracles; yet I cannot see that this is the principal, much less the only sense of these scriptures, and some others which might have been produced to the same purpose.—As to the first of them, in which the apostle speaks of his preaching being 'in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' it may be observed that, in the preceding chapter, he had been speaking concerning Christ preached, and his glory set forth among them, as 'the power of God;' that is to say, the power of God rendered the preaching of the doctrine of Christ effectual to the conversion of those who believed. Now, this the apostle concludes to contain no less a conviction of the truth of the Christian religion, than if he had wrought signs or miracles; which the Jews demanded, and which he had no design to work among them. Why, then, should we suppose that, when he speaks of his preaching being 'in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' he means the confirming of his doctrine by miracles, and not the confirming of it in the same sense he had just signified of Christ being the power of God.—As for the scripture in which it is said, 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,' it is to

be understood by comparing it with what immediately goes before, in which he says, 'I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and know not the speech of them who are puffed up, but the power.' If we suppose that, by 'them who are puffed up,' he means some of their teachers, who, swelled either with pride or envy, probably were sowing some seeds of error among them, it does seem to be just to explain the following words, 'I will know not the speech of them who are puffed up, but the power,' to mean, 'I will not so much regard the doctrines they deliver, as I will inquire and be convinced that they have confirmed them by miracles.' For he would rather regard their doctrine than their pretence to miracles, or have said, 'I will not inquire whether they have wrought any miracles, but what efficacy their doctrine has had.' By 'knowing the power,' therefore, the apostle does not mean that of working miracles; but he intimates that he would know, not only what doctrines these persons taught, but what success attended their preaching. And then he adds, that 'the kingdom of God,' that is, the gospel-state, is advanced and promoted, not merely by the church's enjoying the means of grace, such as the preaching of the word, but 'by the power of God,' which makes the word preached effectual to salvation, whereby sinners are converted, and many added to the church, such as shall be saved.—As to the last scripture mentioned, in which the apostle says, 'Our gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power,' I cannot think that he has any reference in it to the confirming of the gospel by miracles; because what it says is assigned as a mark of their election, 'Knowing, brethren, your election of God; for our gospel came unto you, not only in word, but in power,' &c. Now, whether we take election for God's eternal design to save them, for the execution of that design in his applying the graces of the Spirit to them, or, in the lowest sense which they on the other side of the question generally adopt, for their being a choice, religious, unblameable society of Christians, excelling many others in piety, it could not be evinced by the gospel being confirmed by miracles. This sense, then, seems not agreeable to the apostle's design. Hence, the objection founded on those scriptures which speak of the power of God in conversion, as implying nothing else but his power exerted in working miracles, will not, in the least, be sufficient to weaken the force of the argument we are maintaining. Thus, concerning effectual calling being a work of power attributed, in particular, to the Holy Spirit.

There is one thing more observed in the Answer we are explaining, which must be briefly considered, namely, that effectual calling is a work of grace, which was the internal moving cause of it, or the reason of God's exerting his divine power in it. Effectual calling must be a work of grace, without any motive taken from those who are its subjects; for they had nothing in them which could render them the objects of divine love, being described as 'dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God,' and 'enmity' itself 'against him.' Their condition, antecedent to effectual calling, cannot be supposed to be the moving cause of it; for that which is in itself altogether unlovely, cannot afford a motive for love to any one who weighs the circumstances of persons and things, and acts accordingly.

But it is objected, that though the present condition of unregenerate persons cannot afford any motive inducing God to make them the subjects of effectual calling, yet the foresight of their future conduct might. We answer, that all the good which shall be found in believers is God's gift. He is the finisher as well as the author of faith; and therefore it cannot be said, that any thing out of himself was the moving cause of it. We may add that God foresaw the vile and unworthy behaviour of believers, proceeding from the remains of corrupt nature in them, as well as those graces which he would enable them to act; so that there is as much in them which might induce him to hate them, as there is to move him to love them. We must conclude, therefore, that his love proceeds from another cause, or that it is by the grace of God alone that we are what we are.

IV. We are now led to consider that the power and grace of God displayed in effectual calling, is irresistible, and consequently such as cannot but be effectual to produce that which is designed to be brought about by it. To deny this, would be to infer that the creature has an equal, if not a superior force to God. For, as in nature, every thing which impedes or stops a thing which is in motion must have an equal force to resist with that which is affected by it; so, in the work of

grace, if the will of man can render the power of God of none effect, or stop the progress of divine grace, contrary to his design or purpose, the creature's power of resisting must be equal to that which is put forth by God, in order to the bringing of this work to perfection. This consequence is so derogatory to the divine glory, that no one who sees it to be just, will maintain the premises whence it is deduced. If it be said that God may suffer himself to be resisted, and his grace which would otherwise have been effectual to be defeated, this will not much mend the matter, but will only, in order to the avoiding of one absurd consequence, bring in another; for if every one would have brought to pass what he purposes to be done, and would not be disappointed if he could help it, the same must be said of the great God. Now to say, that God could have prevented his purpose from being defeated, but would not, argues a defect of wisdom. If his own glory was designed by purposing to do that which the creature renders ineffectual, then he misses that end which cannot but be the most valuable, and consequently most desirable. Hence, for God to suffer a purpose of this nature to be defeated, supposing he could prevent it, is to suffer himself to be a loser of that glory which is due to his name. Moreover, the supposition is directly contrary to what the apostle says, 'Who hath resisted his will?'^s or, "Who hath rendered the grace which he designed should take effect, ineffectual?" or, which is the same thing, "Who can do it?"

The ground on which many have asserted that the grace of God may be resisted, is taken from some scriptures which speak of man's being in open hostility against him. Thus we read of a bold daring sinner as 'stretching out his hand against God, and strengthening himself against the Almighty, running upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.'^t Stephen reproves the Jews as having 'always resisted the Holy Ghost, both they and their fathers.'^u The Pharisees are said to 'have rejected,'^x or, as the word^y might have been rendered, 'disannulled the counsel of God against themselves.' And the prophet speaks of God's 'stretching out his hand all the day, unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.'^z These, and similar scriptures, give occasion to some to suppose that the power and grace, as well as the purpose of God, may be resisted. But that we may understand the sense of these scriptures, and, at the same time, not relinquish the doctrine we are maintaining, and thereby infer the consequence above-mentioned, we must distinguish between our opposition to God's revealed will contained in his word, which is the rule of duty to us, and resisting his secret will, which determines the event. Or, as it may be otherwise expressed, it is one thing to set ourselves against the objective grace of God, that is, the gospel; and another thing to defeat his subjective grace, that when he is about to work effectually in us, we should put a stop to his proceedings. The former no one denies; the latter we can by no means allow. Persons may express a great deal of reluctance and perverseness at the time when God is about to subdue their stubborn and obstinate wills; but the power of God will break through all this opposition, and the will of man shall not be able to make his work void, or without effect. The Jews, as above-mentioned, might 'resist the Holy Ghost,' that is, oppose the doctrines contained in scripture, which were given by the Spirit's inspiration; and they might make this revelation of no effect with respect to themselves; but had God designed that it should take effect, he would have prevented their resisting it. Israel might be 'a gainsaying people,' that is, they might oppose what God communicated to them by the prophets, which it was their duty and interest to have complied with; and so the offer of grace in God's revealed will might be in vain with respect to them; but it never was so with respect to those whom he designed to save. And if the hardened sinner, 'stretching out his hand against God,' may be said hereby to express his averseness to holiness, and his desire to be exempted from the divine government, he may be found in open rebellion against him, as hating and opposing his law, but he cannot offer any real injury to his divine perfections, so as to detract from his glory, or render his purpose of no effect. Moses, speaking concerning God's works of providence, says, 'They are perfect; for all his ways are judg-

^s Rom. ix. 19.
^y ἀπειθεῖν.

^t Job xv. 25, 26.
^z Rom. x. 21.

^u Acts vii. 51, 52.

^x Luke vii. 30.

ment.^a Elsewhere, God, by the prophet Isaiah, says, 'I will work, and who shall let it;' ^b whence he argues his eternal Deity and uncontrollable power, 'Before the day was, I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand;' so that if a stop might be put to his works of providence, he would cease to be a God of infinite perfection. May we not infer, then, that his works of grace are not subject to any control; so that when he designs to call any effectually, nothing shall prevent this end from being answered? This is what we intend, when we speak of the power and grace of God as irresistible.

V. We are now to consider the season or time in which persons are effectually called. This, in the Answer under consideration, is said to be 'God's accepted time.' If the work be free and sovereign, without any motive in us, the time in which he does it must be that which he thinks most proper. Here we may observe that some are regenerated in their infancy, when the word can have no instrumentality in producing the least acts of grace. These have therefore the seeds of grace, which spring up and discover themselves when they are able to make use of the word. That persons are capable of regeneration from the womb, is no less evident, than that they are capable of having the seeds or principle of reason, which they certainly have; and if it be allowed that regeneration is connected with salvation, and that infants are capable of the latter, as our Saviour says that 'of such is the kingdom of God,' they must be certainly capable of the former. Not to suppose some infants regenerated from the womb, would, without scripture-warrant, be to exclude a very great part of mankind from salvation. Others are effectually called in their childhood, others in riper years, and some few in old age; that so no age of life may be an inducement to despair, or persons be discouraged from attending on the means of grace. Thus 'Josiah, in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of David his father.'^c David was converted when he was a youth, a stripling of a ruddy and beautiful countenance.^d Moses seems to have been effectually called, when he left Pharaoh's court, and 'it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel;' at which time he was 'forty years old.'^e Abraham seems to have been made partaker of this grace, when he was called to leave his country, when he was seventy-five years old; before which it is probable that he, together with the rest of his family, served other gods.^f We read also, in one instance, of a person converted in the very agonies of death, namely, the thief upon the cross.^g Sometimes when persons seem most disposed to conversion, and are under the greatest convictions, and more inclined to reform their lives than at other times, the work appears, by the issue of it, to be no more than that of common grace, which miscarries and leaves them worse than they were before; and it may be that afterwards, when they seem less inclined, God's accepted time will come, when he begins the work with power, which he afterwards carries on and completes. Some are suffered to run great lengths in sin, before they are effectually called; as the apostle 'Paul, in whom God was pleased to show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.'^h Hence the time and means being entirely in God's hand, as we ought not to presume, but to wait for the day of salvation in all his ordinances; so, whatever our age and circumstances, we are encouraged to hope for the mercy of God unto eternal life, or that he will save and call us with an holy calling.

^a Deut. xxxii. 4.

^b Isa. xliii. 13.

^c 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.

^d 1 Sam. xvi. 12.

compared with chap. xvii. 56, 58.

^e Acts vii. 23.

^f Josh. xxiv. 2. compared with Gen.

xii. 14.

^g Luke xxiii. 43.

^h 1 Tim. i. 16.

[NOTE G. *Common Grace*.—Dr. Ridgeley, in what he says respecting 'common grace,' 'restraining grace,' and 'common operations of the Spirit,' appears to have got so engaged in expounding the Catechism that he forgot duly to inquire, 'What saith the scripture?' Grace which does not 'bring salvation,' and a work of the Holy Spirit on the soul which does not renovate and savingly enlighten, must seem, to any person who has studied the scriptures apart from the theology of the schoolmen, very extraordinary ideas. Dr. Ridgeley himself appears not to understand them. He says, "Though the Spirit is considered as an external agent, inasmuch as he never dwells in the heart of any but believers; yet the effect produced is internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in some degree, in the will, which is almost persuaded to comply." Now, if the Spirit is not an internal agent,—if he never dwells, or carries on a work, in the heart of any but believers; how can he

be said to perform 'operations,' whether 'common' or otherwise, on the souls of persons who continue to reject the truth? 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' 'When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he leads into all truth.' 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned.' While the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, is 'known' to believers, and 'dwelleth with them, and shall be in them,' the world 'cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.' Nor is the case altered by saying that "effects are produced internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in some degree, in the will." By the common occurrences of providence, bereavements, losses, public calamities, pestilences, and rumours of war, as truly as by direct appeals concerning 'temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come,' many an unconverted sinner is occasionally made to 'tremble,' to stand self-convicted of guilt, to resolve upon amendment of conduct, and, in general, to experience strong internal effects upon his moral affections. Yet who would speak of the consternations, the moral panics, the temporary reformations of ordinary life as a work of grace, or the result of common operations of the Spirit? Impressions on the human mind, by means of the occurrences of providence, through the medium of natural conscience and reason, are, in all respects, perfectly distinct from impressions by means of the word of God and the ordinances of Christianity, through the divine Spirit's illuminating power or gracious operations; and these two classes of impressions seem to include all the varieties of moral feeling—of internal effect on the mind and consciences of men, or even upon the will—which come within the limits of human experience on earth. To distinguish a middle class of impressions, and represent these as of higher quality than such as properly comport with man's fallen and unregenerated character, and yet of lower quality than such as are connected with the renewing of the heart and the spiritual illuminating of the understanding, appears to be just a breaking down of the lofty and broad line of demarcation between a work of natural conscience and a work of divine grace,—a work which belongs to the economy of God's general government, and a work which belongs to the sovereign and gracious economy of redemption.

Some sinners, it is true, experience, in coming under the saving work of the Holy Spirit, a concurrence of impressions by means of the divine word and by means of providential events; and other sinners, on the contrary, experience, while they continue in unregeneracy, a series of excitements as truly from the appeals of the Bible as from the general lessons of the divine government. It is not, however, the nature of the instrumentality employed, but the nature of the agency at work in the mind, which constitutes the difference between the effects produced. In the one class, the reason works with the aid merely of natural conscience, while, in the other class, it is enlightened, convinced, and directed by the Holy Spirit. Natural conscience, even in circumstances where the light of revelation is nearly extinct, achieves many a self-accusation; and, in circumstances where the full light of the gospel is enjoyed, may easily be supposed to work out, in thousands of instances, quite as strong moral excitements as those which were felt by Felix under the preaching of Paul. 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,' Rom. ii. 14, 15. Yet the strong workings of conscience even in the heathen, and its still stronger workings in unconverted men under the ordinances of the gospel, take place in connexion simply with God's general moral government, and are quite distinct from any results whatever of the dispensation of the economy of grace, or the redemptional operations of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Ridgeley vindicates what he calls "the Spirit's common work of conviction," by an appeal to the text, 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.' But this text clearly speaks of the demonstrative evidence which the Holy Spirit should furnish—not by transient impressions on the minds of the ungodly—but by the miraculous establishment of the gospel dispensation, and by the actual conversion to God of multitudes of unbelievers. When he descended on the day of Pentecost, and when he afterwards gave power to the ministry of his faithful servants, he demonstratively convinced thousands of 'the world' that they sinned in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the only Saviour of sinners,—that they could become righteous, as to either their acceptance before God, or the purification of their hearts from defilement, only through the merits of Christ's sacrifice and intercession,—and that they could act safely for themselves and piously toward God, only by seeing that 'all judgment is committed to the Son,' that he is the King and the Lawgiver of the redeemed, and that he reigns 'the Lord of the living and the dead,' 'alive for evermore,' having 'the keys of hell and of death.' 'When the Paraclete is come,' says the Saviour, 'he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me: of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged,' John xvi. 8—11. The Divine Spirit began this work on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand 'gladly received the word and were baptized;' he carried it on in the ministry of the apostles, who 'preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,'—whose 'preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' and he continues still to conduct it both by the enduring attestation of those miracles by which he established the new dispensation, and by his gracious power upon men to enlighten them savingly in the knowledge of the gospel, and to turn them from the error of their ways to the wisdom and obedience of the just. But his thus 'reproving the world of sin,' is a work altogether different from his alleged 'common operations' as an agent acting 'externally' upon unbelievers.

Dr. Ridgeley refers also to the passage, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' But if the words be read in their connexion, they will be seen to have no reference whatever to the moral or economical work of the divine Spirit, but to refer entirely to the shortening of the period of human life upon earth. The chapter in which they lie, narrates simply the general wickedness into

which the antediluvians had plunged, the longevity and physical strength for which they were distinguished, the tendency of their conduct to undermine all their well-being, and the denunciation against them of a suitable punishment for their luxurious profligacy. Just after their peculiar wickedness is mentioned, and immediately previous to a statement of their robustness and longevity, the words occur: 'And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.' Even apart from the context, this passage may be distinctly seen to speak of the shortening of man's mortal life. He had hitherto lived, on the average, to upwards of nine hundred years; but he was mortal—he possessed that 'fleshly' and fallen nature which was doomed to return to its original dust; he had been upheld in his longevity by the special kindness of the Giver of life; and as he was now pursuing a course which directly tended to debilitate his frame, and entail diseases on his posterity, and poison the stream of human generation at its fountain, he should no longer be maintained in his robustness and his extreme length of earthly existence;—'yet his days,' though no longer extending to eight or nine centuries, 'should be an hundred and twenty years.' What means this finishing clause, this exceptional or mitigating statement, if the passage does not entirely refer to the abridging of his longevity? Nor is it strange that the intimation of that event was made in the phrase, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' In transmuting chaos into the organized world, 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;' and in the whole process of calling away mortals from the earth and repeopling their places with successors, God 'takes away their spirit רוח—they die and return to their dust; he sends forth his Spirit רוח—they are created, and he renews the face of the earth,' Psalm civ. 29, 30. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic versions, accordingly, appear to understand the clause in question as speaking of the animating principle, and all render it, 'My Spirit will not always dwell with man.'

A third passage is alluded to by Dr. Ridgeley—'Quench not the Spirit.' But as this text occurs in connexion with the commands, 'Despise not prophesyings,' 'Prove all things,' it seems beyond doubt to refer to the Holy Spirit's miraculous gifts. Both in the word σβεννυσται, here rendered 'quench,' and in the word αναζωοποιεω, signifying to 'revive a fire,' in the somewhat parallel passage, 2 Tim. i. 6, there appears, in the judgment of Macknight and other critics, to be an obvious allusion to the 'cloven tongues as of fire,' which rested on the disciples at the impartation of miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost. These gifts, it is quite clear, were conferred on a principle altogether distinct from the grace of the Holy Spirit's economical operations; for, as appears by some examples, as well as by our Lord's statement of what he shall say at the day of final accounts to many who have 'cast out devils and done wonderful works,' they were possessed, in some instances, by persons who were strangers to divine grace. Nothing, therefore, can be inferred from either the possession or the 'quenching' of the Spirit in the sense of miraculous gifts, to sanction the notion of 'common' as distinguished from 'special' operations of the Spirit in the economy of salvation.

In addition to the three texts at which I have glanced, I am not aware of any argument in favour of the doctrine in question, except appeal to the ordinary history of unregenerated hearers of the gospel. We are invited to observe how many of these persons are brought into temporary religious concern, and how all of them are more or less subjected to an influence for good, by means of the ordinances of Christianity; and we are then requested to say on what principle, different from that of 'common grace,' or 'common operations' of the Spirit, we can account for the phenomena we witness. Now, the beneficent tendency of the gospel, its humanizing influence, its power to awe and restrain and agitate even its enemies, are quite manifest. But, while it operates on all who come within its sphere, and is eventually to every one either a savour of life unto life or a savour of death unto death, it is the instrument of the Holy Spirit's economical work only in achieving salvation,—it is 'the law of the Spirit of life' only in making men 'free from the law of sin and death.' In every other respect, the results of its influence stand connected not with the covenant, not with the system of grace, but with the moral government of God,—with the beneficence and the equity of the divine general administration. All men have consciences, and are accountable beings, and experience movements of the moral affections; and when any two sections of them—one section sitting under the light of Christian ordinances, and the other section sitting in the darkness of dominant heathenism—experience kindred emotions of self-accusation or religious concern, the former section are not, on account of these emotions being stronger or from a more influential instrumentality, to be viewed, any more than the latter, as the subjects of 'common grace,' or as possessing, in any degree or in any sense, the peculiar boons of sovereign favour which are bestowed on the renewed and justified. There hence comes to be no alternative but either unqualifiedly to reject the doctrine of 'common grace,' or to mould it into the latitudinarian form of the kindred but broader doctrine held by the Pelagians.—ED.]

[NOTE H. *Regeneration*.—Dr. Ridgeley makes a distinction, to which he appears to attach considerable importance, between the implantation of the principle of grace, and the exciting of that principle into activity. This, however, is either a distinction without a difference, or it distinguishes regeneration from sanctification. Regeneration, define it as we may, consists in the commencement of the work of holiness in the heart,—in the first breathing, the first experience, or the actual reception of spiritual life; and sanctification consists in the progressive advancement of the work of holiness,—the continued existence, the strengthening, the maturing, or, in one word, the *activity* of the spiritual life. Now, if the life conveyed to the renovated soul is at all to be viewed in itself, abstractedly from the same life viewed in its activity, there can be a distinction, not between two things constituting the commencement of the life, but only between the life as received and the life as performing its functions. We shall hence have a distinction, not between the implantation and the activity of the principle of renovation, but between renovation or regeneration itself, and the sequent work of sanctification.

What Dr. Ridgeley means by 'the principle of grace' can be easily conjectured and understood,

but is ill expressed by the phrase which he employs. 'A new heart,' or desires different from any the soul experienced before,—'the seed of God,' or love to holiness, love to the divine service, love to whatever is divine,—'conformity to the divine image,' or moral affections kindred in character to those displayed in the divine word and government,—'eternal life,' or the begun experience of a spiritual vitality perfectly suited to the soul's capacities, and enduring as its own immortality,—'a new creation,' or the instantaneous but silent appearance of order, and light, and beauty, where all before was chaos, darkness, and deformity;—these are the graphic images, the illustrative descriptions, by which the inspired oracles exhibit the idea of regeneration. But they are clumsily, and not a little injuriously, epitomized in the phrase 'the principle of grace.' The word principle is too general, too abstract, too misty to bring vividly or fully before the view the glowing notion of transformation, creation, *life*. We usually think of a principle as something distinct from practice,—either as the precept or doctrine by which conduct is directed, or as the moral impression, the belief, the habitual conviction which the precept or doctrine produces. No such conception, however, is to be formed of the differentia—whatever it be—between a regenerated and an unregenerated man. Call it what we may, we must conceive of it as 'a heart,' 'a nature,' an *animus*, 'a life,'—something which has activity in its very essence, and which exists at all only as it thinks, and feels, and propels to conduct. When we reflect on the act of material creation—on God's speaking and it was done, on his commanding and it stood fast—we cannot conceive of the implanting of a principle of organization and order and beauty in our world, apart from the exciting of that principle into action; nor when we reflect on the communication of life to Adam—when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul—can we conceive of any commencement of his animated being, call it what we may, apart from the first actual movement of his vital organs, or any commencement of his moral and intellectual existence, apart from his first act of consciousness, or his real capacity of rational and moral thinking. So with regard to 'the new creation,' or the spiritual life of regeneration, there is no abstraction,—no abstraction especially which is 'implanted,'—nothing but what is positive or what exists in an active state. Perception of divine truth, love to God, desire for holiness, or whatever else constitutes the spiritual life, is, in its essence, as truly active in regeneration as in sanctification. Indeed, sanctification is just the perpetuation and bringing to maturity of what is begun in regeneration,—a series, in progressive strength and growing fulness, of the same acts as that in which regeneration consists,—the development of that vitality, the confirming and enlarging exercise of those vital functions, which begin in regeneration, as the developing and growing life of an infant began in the first pulsation of the heart. As truly, therefore, might we speak of a principle of grace in sanctification apart from actual and active holiness, as we may speak of a principle of grace in regeneration apart from the active nature of the commencement of spiritual life.

Dr. Ridgeley's distinction seems to have been framed in order to support his notion that "the regenerating act is wrought in us without the instrumentality of the word, or of any of the ordinary means of grace." How he could have adopted this notion in the face of the texts which he himself quotes, is not very easy to conceive. These texts seem to be sufficiently explicit: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.' 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.' Dr. Ridgeley discovers, however, that "this language respects not so much the implanting of the principle of grace, as our being enabled to act from that principle;" that is, he previously sets up a distinction between the abstract being and the active nature of spiritual life, and then, on the faith of that distinction, perceives the texts of scripture in question to refer, not to 'the regenerating act,' but to the moral ability or activity which it imparts. Yet no words, in any part of scripture, would seem to speak more directly and even distinctively of 'the regenerating act,' than the phrases, 'We are born again,' 'Of his own will begat he us.' Where, if not in these phrases, as they occur here and in other texts, is inspired language to be found which describes even what Dr. Ridgeley calls 'the implanting of the principle of grace;' or where, if these phrases be otherwise explained, does authority exist for speaking, in any respect whatever, of regeneration? Yet the two passages in which they lie explicitly ascribe our being 'born again,' and our being 'begotten of God' to the instrumentality of 'the word of truth,' 'the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.'

Dr. Ridgeley states, as the ground of his opinion, that the regenerating act is effected without the instrumentality of the word, that "it is necessary, from the nature of the thing, to our receiving or improving the word of God, or reaping any saving advantage by it, that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith;" and he thus reasons: "Now to say that this is done by the word, is, in effect, to assert that the word produces the principle, and the principle gives efficacy to the word; which seems to me little less than arguing in a circle." But does not the vice of reasoning in a circle appear somewhat strongly to characterize his own argument? 'Saving advantage,' if the phrase have any due signification, must mean the advantage of obtaining or receiving salvation. Now, this advantage he very justly represents as received by faith in the divine record; while, at the same time, he represents it as 'from the nature of the thing,' previously received in a regenerating act which is wrought without the instrumentality of the word. In other words, saving advantage, according to him, must be received in order to saving advantage being received; or while enjoyed by faith in the word, it must, nevertheless, be previously enjoyed without the instrumentality of the word. That I do not misstate his argument, seems certain from a remark which he makes respecting faith,—a remark of somewhat startling discord with his preceding context. "*I am far from denying,*" says he, "*that faith and all other graces, are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word.*" Yet he had said, "It is necessary to our receiving or improving the word of God that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith." The word, that is to say, is the instrument in producing faith; and yet is of no saving use to us whatever, and, of course, of no use in producing faith, till faith be actually produced. Dr. Ridgeley may be alleged, indeed, to distinguish

between 'the *grace* of faith' and 'the *principle* of faith,' for he uses the former phrase when admitting, and the latter, when denying that faith is wrought by the instrumentality of the word. But, if words have meaning, faith is a grace simply as it is of divine origin, and it is a principle simply as it prompts and regulates conduct; and, under the two names, it is strictly and entirely one thing, merely viewed in different aspects. Besides, he uses the word 'faith' without the adjunct of either 'grace' or 'principle,' in a sentence which exhibits even a larger circumference than that already noticed, of reasoning in a circle. He says, "The word cannot profit unless it be mixed with faith; faith cannot be put forth unless it proceed from a principle of grace implanted; therefore this principle of grace is not produced by the word!" Yet, while a principle of grace goes before faith, and faith goes before the instrumentality of the word, both "faith and all other graces are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word." Such is the confusion of thought resulting from the distinction between the implantation and the activity of "the principle of regeneration."

'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' We believe, not by possessing an abstract capacity, but by counting true the record which God has given concerning his Son. Our minds, by their own unaided efforts, will look in vain upon divine truth in order either to understand its spiritual import, or receive it in its evidence; yet they are necessarily turned toward it, and made to look on some of its declarations, when the divine Spirit gives them 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' Just while he speaks in his word—while he discloses the truth in its real colours, its genuine glory, its perfect adaptation to man—he makes all things new. In the moral creation, as in the physical, 'he speaks and it is done, he commands and it stands fast.' Exhibiting the truth in its evidence, enlightening the understanding, affecting the heart, giving origin to faith, and renewing the spirit of the mind, are all but different phases of strictly one act. When the change which passes upon a sinner on his being made spiritually alive, is viewed in reference to the instrumentality employed, it is called his believing or receiving the truth; when it is viewed in reference to its result upon his understanding, it is called the enlightening of his mind; when it is viewed in reference to its result upon his heart or character, it is called regeneration; and when it is viewed in reference to its result on his condition, or in reference rather to the redemptional grounds on which it is effected, it is called justification. These constituent parts or different aspects of the impartation to a dead soul of eternal life, are exhibited in scripture, not as consecutive acts in a causal process,—not as separate events or separate things following one another in a given order,—but strictly as one great change, constituting the man who was dead in trespasses and sins alive unto God. Perfectly distinct, therefore, as the conceptions afforded us by the Bible are of our change of state, our change of character, and our change of views—our justification, our regeneration, and the saving enlightenment of our understanding—we are not to conceive of even these as arising out of one another in the order of causation or the order of priority; and still less are we to conceive in this manner of any number of parts or aspects into which we may divide our notions either of believing, of being enlightened, or of becoming 'new creatures in Christ Jesus.' However much, in particular, we may, for the sake of clearness of conception, distribute our thoughts on regeneration into classes referring to the agency, the instrumentality, the concomitant circumstances, the results upon the will, the desires and the affections, we must carefully sum them all up in the one idea stated in the expressive phrase, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.'

A dispute, then, in which some writers have indulged, as to whether, in regeneration, there is the implantation of a positive principle, or merely the communication of light to the understanding which acts reflexly on the heart, is—if the subject be viewed as we have stated it—a mere logomachy. What one party really mean by the reflex influence of communicated light, is probably just what the other party mean by the implantation of a positive principle. Both expressions—as all words must be which refer to matters of mere consciousness or abstract intelligence, and especially to matters of divine influence on the soul—are essentially figurative; and they differ from each other, if they differ at all, only in the strength and appropriateness of their respective tropes. Light, literally understood, is just as really positive as any palpable substance capable of being implanted; and light, understood metaphorically of what is conveyed to the understanding and impressed on the heart by the divine Spirit, can differ nothing from what is termed the implantation of a principle of grace. The metaphor of implanting, however,—especially when collocated with the very general and indefinite word 'principle'—falls far short, as to either fitness or force, of the expressive metaphors of the shining of light into darkness, a resurrection from the dead, a new creation, and a being begotten of God, or begotten again, employed in the scriptures. Even the phrase, 'the new birth' or being 'born again,' so currently applied to regeneration and repeatedly occurring in our English version of the New Testament, is considerably less expressive than the phrase whose place it usurps, 'begotten anew,' or 'begotten from above.' Reading the passage as it ought to be translated, how doubly significant, for example, are the words: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love ye one another with a pure heart fervently, *ye having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.*'

The great features of regeneration, additional to the grace and the divine agency of its origination, the instrumentality of the divine word in effecting it, and its connexion in identity of occurrence with justification through the merits of Christ, are its instantaneity, its moral nature, its totality, its incompleteness, and its imperceptibility to consciousness. Its instantaneity is its being, not a work or a process, but a single act; and appears from the character of the metaphors, especially those of creation, resurrection, and the impartation of life, which are employed to describe it. Its moral nature is its affecting only man's will, his affections, and his views or motives of action, and not his intellectual powers or the peculiar configuration of his mind; and appears both from the fact that regenerated men retain just the intellectual faculties and culture which they possessed when unregenerated, and from the statement that 'the old man' is crucified in the crucifixion of

depraved 'affections and desires,' and that the new man is created after the image of God 'in righteousness and true holiness.' Its totality is its affecting all the moral faculties, leaving not one moral power, not one member of the heart, untouched; and appears from the idea of entireness conveyed in the images of a new creation, a new heart, a new man, as well as from the declaration, 'Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' Its incompleteness is its affecting the soul only in the way of begun holiness, of the commencement of a work of sanctification, of the impartation of what requires to be reared up to maturity; and appears both from the imperfect state in which regenerated persons continue while on earth, and from the image of 'a babe in Christ' employed to describe the comparative condition of a recent convert. Its imperceptibility to consciousness is its not being, by the mind of its subject, distinguishable, as to the very act in which it takes place, from those emotions of concern which precede or accompany it, or from the commencing growth of those fruits of inward holiness by which its reality is evinced; and it appears, both from the experimental testimony of men who afford eminent evidence of having been its subjects, and from the express declaration of our Lord: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Such seem to be the characteristic features of regeneration. They are exhibited, however, not as separate things in the act, and still less as things which in any sense originate one another, but simply as different aspects of the same thing, conceived of separately, and viewed each by each, for the sake of distinctly conceiving the undivided whole.—Ep.]

COMMUNION IN GRACE WITH CHRIST.

QUESTION LXIX. *What is the communion in grace, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?*

ANSWER. The communion in grace, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is, their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.

HAVING considered the vital union which the members of the invisible church have with Christ in their effectual calling, we are now led to speak concerning the communion in grace which they have with him.

Communion with Christ does not in the least import our being made partakers of any of the glories or privileges which belong to him as Mediator; but it consists in our participation of those benefits which he hath purchased for us. It implies, on his part, infinite condescension, that he will be pleased to communicate such blessings to us; and, on ours, unspeakable honours and privileges, which we enjoy from him. It is sometimes called 'fellowship';ⁱ which is the result of friendship, and proceeds from his love. Thus our Saviour speaks of his 'loving' his disciples, 'and manifesting himself to them.'^k It also proceeds from union with him, and is the immediate effect and consequence of effectual calling. Hence, God is said to have 'called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.'^l It is farther said, in this Answer, to be a manifestation of our union with him. He has received those blessings for us which he purchased by his blood; and, accordingly, is the treasury, as well as the fountain of all grace; and we are therefore said to 'receive of his fulness, grace for grace.'^m And the blessings which we are said to receive, by virtue of his mediation, are justification, adoption, and sanctification, with all other benefits which either accompany or flow from them. These are particularly explained in the following Answers.

i 1 John i. 3.

k John xiv. 21.

l 1 Cor. i. 9.

m John i. 16.

JUSTIFICATION.

QUESTION LXX. *What is justification?*

ANSWER. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

QUESTION LXXI. *How is justification an act of God's free grace?*

ANSWER. Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice, in the behalf of them that are justified; yet, inasmuch as God accepteth the satisfaction from a Surety, which he might have demanded of them, did provide this Surety, his own only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith; which also is his gift; their justification is, to them, of free grace.

The Importance of the Doctrine of Justification.

Hitherto we have been led to consider that change of heart and life which is begun in effectual calling; whereby a dead sinner is made alive, and one who was wholly indisposed for good works, and averse to the performance of them, is enabled to perform them by the power of divine grace. Now we are to speak concerning that change of state which accompanies change of heart; whereby one who, being guilty before God, was liable to the condemning sentence of the law, and expected no other than an eternal banishment from his presence, is pardoned, received into favour, and has a right to all the blessings which Christ has, by his obedience and sufferings, purchased for him. This is what we call justification; and it is placed immediately after the subject of effectual calling, agreeably to the method in which it is insisted on in the golden chain of salvation exhibited by the apostle, 'Whom he called, them he also justified.'ⁿ

This is certainly a doctrine of the highest importance; inasmuch as it contains the way of peace, the foundation of all our hope, of the acceptance both of our persons and our services, and the beholding of the face of God, at last, with joy. Some have styled it the very basis of Christianity. Our forefathers thought it so necessary to be insisted on and maintained, according to the scripture account of it, that they reckoned it one of the principal doctrines of the Reformation. Indeed, the apostle Paul speaks of it as so necessary to be believed, that he concluded the denying or perverting of it to be the ground and reason of the Jews being rejected: 'Who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' If, as many suppose, their call be meant in the account which we have of 'the marriage of the Lamb, and of his wife having made herself ready,'^o it is worth observing that she is described as 'arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints,' or, Christ's righteousness by which they are justified. This is that in which they glory; and therefore they are represented as being convinced of the importance of that doctrine of which they were formerly ignorant.

This doctrine we have an account of in the two Answers which we are now to explain. In considering it, we shall endeavour to observe the following method. First, we shall consider what we are to understand by the word 'justify.' Secondly, we shall inquire what the privileges are, which are contained in it, as reduced to two heads, namely, pardon of sin, and God's accounting those who are justified righteous in his sight. Thirdly, we shall inquire what the foundation is of our justification, namely, a righteousness wrought out for us. Fourthly, we shall show the utter inability of fallen man to perform any righteousness which can be the matter of his justification in the sight of God. Fifthly, we shall show that our Lord Jesus Christ has, as our surety, wrought out this righteousness for us, by performing active and passive obedience, which is imputed to us for our justification. Sixthly, we shall consider justification as an act of God's free grace. Lastly, we shall show the use of faith in justification, or in what respects faith is said to justify.

The Meaning of the Word 'Justify.'

We shall first consider in what sense we are to understand the word 'justify.' As there are many disputes about the method of explaining the doctrine of justification; so there is a contest between us and the Papists about the sense of the word. They generally suppose that 'to justify,' is to make inherently righteous and holy; because righteousness and holiness sometimes import the same thing, and because both denote an internal change in the person who is so denominated. Accordingly, they argue that, as to magnify signifies to make great,—to fortify, to make strong,—so to justify, is to make just or holy. And they suppose that whatever we do to make ourselves so, or whatever good works are the ingredients of our sanctification, must be considered as the matter of our justification. Some Protestant divines have supposed that the difference between them and us is principally about the sense of a word. This favourable and charitable construction of their doctrine would have been less exceptionable, if the Papists had asserted no more than that justification might be taken in the sense they contend for, when not considered as giving us a right to eternal life, or as being the foundation of that sentence of absolution which God passes upon us. But as this is the sense they give of it, when they say that we are justified by our inherent holiness, we are bound to conclude that it is very remote from the scripture sense of the word. We do not deny that justification is sometimes taken in a sense different from that in which it is understood when used to signify the doctrine we are explaining. Sometimes nothing more is intended by it, than our vindicating the divine perfections from any charge which is pretended to be brought against them. Thus the psalmist says, 'That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.'^p And our Saviour is said to be justified, that is, his person or character vindicated or defended, from the reproaches which were cast on him. 'Wisdom,' it is said, 'is justified of her children.'^q We frequently read in scripture, also, of the justification of the actions or conduct of persons; in which sense their own works may be said to justify or vindicate them from the charge of hypocrisy or unregeneracy. Again, to justify is sometimes taken, in scripture, for using endeavours to turn many to righteousness. Hence, the words, in the prophecy of Daniel, which signify, 'they who justify many,' are rendered by our translators, 'they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars.'^r There are various other senses given of this word, which we pass over as not applicable to the doctrine we are maintaining.

We shall proceed to consider the sense in which it is used, when importing a sinner's justification in the sight of God. When thus used, it is to be taken only in a forensic sense; and accordingly signifies a person's being acquitted or discharged from guilt or a liability to condemnation, in such a way as is done in courts of judicature. Thus we read in the judicial law, 'If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.'^s Here 'to justify the righteous,' is to be understood for acquitting, or discharging from condemnation, one who appears to be righteous, or not guilty; while 'the wicked,' that is, they who appear to be guilty, are to be 'condemned.' In this sense the word is used, when applied to the doctrine of justification, in the New Testament, and particularly in Paul's epistles, who largely insists on this subject. Now, that we may understand how a sinner may expect to be discharged at God's tribunal, let us consider the methods of proceeding used in human courts of judicature. In these, it is supposed that there is a law which forbids some actions which are deemed criminal; and also that a punishment is annexed to this law, which renders the person who violates it guilty. Next, persons are supposed to be charged with the violation of the law; and if the charge be not made good, they are said to be justified, that is, cleared from presumptive, not real guilt. But if the charge be made good, and if he who falls under it is liable to punishment, and actually suffers the

^p Psal. li. 4. ^q Matt. xi. 19; Luke vii. 35. ^r Dan. xii. 3. רמצידיק. ^s Deut. xxv. 1.

punishment, he is justified ; as in crimes which are not of a capital nature. Or if he be any otherwise cleared from the charge, so that his guilt be removed, he is deemed a justified person, and the law has nothing to lay to his charge, with respect to that which he was accused of. Thus, when a sinner, who had been charged with the violation of the divine law, found guilty before God, and exposed to a sentence of condemnation, is freed from it, he is said to be justified.

The Privileges contained in Justification.

We are now led to consider the privileges contained in justification. These are forgiveness of sin, and a right and title to eternal life. They are sufficiently distinguished, though never separated ; so that, when we find but one of them mentioned in a particular scripture which treats on this subject, the other is not excluded. Forgiveness of sin is sometimes expressed in scripture, by not imputing sin ; and a right to life, includes our being made partakers of the adoption of children, and a right to the inheritance prepared for them. The apostle mentions both when he speaks of our having ‘redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins,’ and of our being ‘made meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’^t Elsewhere, also, he speaks of Christ’s ‘redeeming them that were under the law,’ which includes the former branch of justification ; and of their ‘receiving the adoption of children,’ which includes the latter. Again, he considers justified persons as ‘having peace with God,’ which more especially respects pardon of sin ; and of their ‘having access to the grace wherewith they stand,’ and ‘rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,’^u which is what we are to understand by, or includes, their right to life.

That justification consists of both these branches, we maintain against the Papists. They suppose that it includes nothing else but forgiveness of sin, which is founded on the blood of Christ ; and they say that our right to life depends on our internal qualifications or sincere obedience. There are also some Protestant divines who suppose that it consists only in pardon of sin. This is asserted by them, with different views. Some assert it as most consistent with the doctrine of justification by works, which they plead for ; while others assert it as most agreeable to another notion which they advance, namely, that we are justified only by Christ’s passive obedience, which will be considered under a following Head. Again, there are others, whose views of the doctrine of justification are agreeable to scripture, who maintain that it includes both forgiveness of sins and a right to life ; but who yet say that the former is founded on Christ’s passive obedience, and the latter on his active. We cannot but think, however, that the whole of Christ’s obedience, both active and passive, is the foundation of each. But as this point will be considered when we come to speak concerning the procuring cause of our justification, all that we shall observe at present, is, that the two privileges in question are inseparably connected. As no one can have a right to life, but he whose sins are pardoned ; so no one can obtain forgiveness of sin, without, in consequence, having a right to life. As by the fall man became guilty, and then lost that right to life which was promised in the event of his standing, so it is agreeable to the divine perfections, provided the guilt be removed, that he should be put in the same state as if it had not been contracted, and consequently he should have, not only forgiveness of sins, but a right to life. Forgiveness of sin, without a right to eternal life, would render our justification incomplete. Hence, when any one is pardoned by an act of grace, he is put in possession of that which, by his rebellion, he had forfeited ; he is considered, not only as released out of prison, but as one who has the privileges of a subject, such as those which he had before he committed the crime. Without this he would be like Absalom, when, upon Joab’s intercession with David, the guilt of murder, which he had contracted, was remitted so far as that he had liberty to return from Geshur, whither he had fled ; but who, nevertheless, reckons himself not fully discharged from the guilt he had contracted, and concludes his return to Jerusalem, as it were an insignificant privilege, unless by being admitted to see

^t Col. i. 12, 14.

^u Rom. v. 1, 2.

the king's face, and enjoy the privileges which he was possessed of before, he might be dealt with as one who was taken into favour, as well as forgiven;^x which was accordingly granted. This leads us to a particular consideration of the two branches of justification.

1. Forgiveness of sin. Sin is sometimes represented as containing moral impurity, as opposed to holiness of heart and life. Accordingly, it is said to 'defile a man';^y and it is set forth in scripture by several metaphorical expressions which tend to beget an abhorrence of it as of things impure. In this sense it is removed in sanctification, rather than in justification. Not but that divines sometimes speak of Christ's redeeming us from the filth and the dominion of sin, and our deliverance from it in justification. But when the filth and the dominion of sin are thus spoken of, they are to be understood as rendering us guilty; inasmuch as all moral pollutions are criminal, as contrary to the law of God. For, were they not so viewed, our deliverance from them would not be a branch of justification. In speaking on this subject, therefore, we shall consider sin as that which renders men guilty before God, and so show what we are to understand by guilt.

Guilt supposes a person to be under a law, and to have violated it. Accordingly, sin is described as 'the transgression of the law.'^z The law of God, in common with all other laws, is primarily designed to be the rule of obedience; and, in order to its being so, it is a declaration of the divine will which, as creatures and subjects, we are under a natural obligation to comply with. Moreover, God, as a God of infinite holiness and sovereignty, cannot but signify his displeasure in case of disobedience; and therefore he has annexed a threatening to his law, or passed a condemning sentence, as what is due for every transgression. This, divines sometimes call the sanction of the law, or a fence with which it is guarded, that so, through the corruption of our nature, we may not conclude that we may rebel against him with impunity. The scripture styles it, 'the curse of the law';^a so that guilt is a liableness to the curse, or condemning sentence of the law, for our violation of it. It is sometimes called a debt of punishment which we owe to the justice of God for not paying that debt of obedience which was due from us to his law. Thus, when our Saviour advises us to pray that our sins may be forgiven, he expresses it by 'forgiving us our debts';^b so that forgiveness, as it is a freeing us from guilt, discharges us from the debt of punishment to which we were liable. There is a twofold debt which man owes to God. One he owes to him as a creature under a law. This is that debt of obedience which he cannot be discharged from; and therefore a justified person is, in this sense, as much a debtor as any other. There is also a debt which man contracts as a criminal, whereby he is liable to suffer punishment. This alone is removed in justification. Moreover, we must carefully distinguish between the demerit of sin, or its desert of punishment, and the sinner's obligation to suffer punishment for it. The former is inseparable from sin, and not removed, or in the least lessened, by pardoning mercy. For sin is no less the object of the divine detestation, nor is its intrinsic evil or demerit abated, by its being forgiven. Hence, a justified person remaining still a sinner, as transgressing the law of God, has as much reason to condemn himself in this respect as if he had not been forgiven. The psalmist, speaking concerning a person who is actually forgiven or justified, says, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'^c He was in a justified state, but yet concludes that there is a demerit of punishment in every sin which he committed; though, when it is pardoned, the obligation to suffer punishment is taken away.^d Hence, the apostle speaking of such, says, 'There is no condemnation to them.'^e We must farther distinguish between our having matter of condemnation in us,—which a justified person has; and there being no condemnation to us, which is the immediate result of being pardoned.

There are several expressions in scripture whereby forgiveness is set forth. It

x 2 Sam. xiv. 32.

y Matt. xv. 19, 20.

z 1 John iii. 4.

a Gal. iii. 10.

b Luke xi. 4; Matt. vi. 12.

c Psal. cxxx. 3.

d The former of these divines call 'reatus potentialis;' the latter, 'reatus actualis.' The former is the immediate consequence of sin; the latter is taken away in justification.

e Rom. viii. 1.

is called God's covering sin. Thus the psalmist says, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'^f It is called, also, his hiding his face from it, and blotting it out; its 'not being found'^g 'when it is sought for';^h and 'casting our sins into the depths of the sea.'ⁱ Elsewhere it is said that, when God had pardoned the sins of his people, 'he did not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel.'^k This amounts to the same thing as the foregoing expressions, as to sin being covered, hid, blotted out, &c. I am sensible there have been many contests about the sense of this scripture, which might, without much difficulty, have been compromised, had the contending parties been desirous to know one another's opinion without prejudice or partiality. It is not to be thought that, when God forgives sin, he does not know or suppose that the person forgiven had contracted guilt by sins committed; for without this he could not be the object of forgiveness. When God is said not to look upon his people's sins, or to hide his face from them, it is not to be supposed that he knows not what they have done, or what iniquities they daily commit against him; for that would be subversive of his omniscience. When, again, he is said not to mark our iniquities, we are not to understand it as if he did not look upon the sins we commit, though in a justified state, with abhorrence; for the sinner may be pardoned, and yet the crime forgiven be detested. God's not seeing sin in his people, is to be understood in a forensic sense. Accordingly, when an atonement is made for sin, and the guilt of it is taken away, the criminal is, in the eye of the law, as if he had not sinned. He is as fully discharged from the indictment which was brought in against him, as if he had been innocent,—not liable to any charge founded upon it. Hence, the apostle says, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.'^l It is the same thing as for God 'not to enter into judgment,' as the psalmist elsewhere expresses it; or to 'punish us less than our iniquities have deserved.'^m In this sense, the indictment which was brought against the sinner is cancelled, the sentence reversed, and prosecution stopped; so that whatever evils are endured as the consequence of sin, or with a design to humble the transgressor for it, as bringing sin to his remembrance with all its aggravating circumstances, he is encouraged to hope that these are inflicted, not in a judicial way by the vindictive justice of God demanding satisfaction, but to display and set forth the holiness of his nature as infinitely opposed to all sin, and also the holiness of the dispensations of his providence, and that with a design to bring the transgressor to repentance.

That the privilege of forgiveness may appear to be most conducive to our happiness and comfort, let it be considered that, wherever God forgives sin, he forgives all sin, cancels every debt which rendered the sinner liable to punishment. Were it otherwise, our condition would be very miserable, and our salvation impossible. Our condition would be like that of a person who has several indictments brought in against him, every one of which contains an intimation that his life is forfeited; and whom it would avail very little for one indictment to be superseded, while the sentence due to him for the others should be executed. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of 'the free gift' being 'of many,' that is, of the multitude of our 'offences unto justification.'ⁿ Elsewhere, too, he speaks of God's forgiving his people 'all trespasses.'^o And as he forgives all past sins, so he gives the pardoned ground to conclude that iniquity shall not be their ruin; so that the same grace which now abounds towards them in forgiveness, together with the virtue of the atonement made for sin, shall prevent future crimes from being charged upon them to their condemnation. Thus concerning forgiveness of sin.

The other privilege which they who are justified are made partakers of, is the acceptance of their persons as righteous in the sight of God. They are said to be 'made accepted in the Beloved.'^p And as their persons are accepted, so are their performances, notwithstanding the many defects which adhere to them. Thus God is said to have 'had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.'^q Besides, they have a right and title to eternal life; which is that inheritance which Christ has purchased for them, and which God, in his covenant of grace, has promised to them.

^f Psal. xxxii. 1.
^k Numb. xxiii. 21.
ⁿ Rom. v. 16.

^g Jer. l. 20.
^l Rom. viii. 33.
^o Col. ii. 13.

^h Psal. li. 9.
^m Psal. cxliii. 2; Ezra ix. 13.
^p Eph. i. 6.
^q Gen. iv. 4.

This is a very comprehensive blessing ; for it contains a right to all those great and precious promises which God has made respecting their happiness both here and hereafter. But we shall have occasion to insist on it under a following Answer, when speaking on the subject of adoption, which some divines, not without good reason, conclude to be a branch of justification, or at least to contain those positive privileges which they who are justified partake of, either here or hereafter.

The Foundation of Justification.

We now proceed to consider what is the foundation of our justification. This must be some righteousness wrought out either by us or for us. Since justification is a person's being 'made righteous,' as the apostle styles it,^r we must consider what we are to understand by this phrase. A person is said to be righteous who never violated the law of God, or exposed himself to its condemning sentence. In this respect, man, while in a state of innocency, was righteous. His perfect obedience was the righteousness which, according to the tenor of the covenant he was under, gave him a right to eternal life ; and it would especially have done so, had it been persisted in till he became possessed of that life. But such a righteousness as this cannot be the foundation of our justification ; for the apostle says, 'By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.'^s The righteousness we are now speaking of must be something wrought out for us by one who stood in our room and stead, and was able to pay that debt of obedience and endure those sufferings which were due for sin. This debt the law of God might have exacted of us, and insisted on the payment of in our own persons ; and, as paid by Christ for us, it is, as will be considered under a following Head, that which we generally call Christ's righteousness, or what he did and suffered in our stead in conformity to the law of God ; whereby its honour was secured and vindicated, and justice satisfied, so that God appears to be, as the apostle says, 'just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'^t

Man's inability to work out a justifying Righteousness.

We are now to consider the utter inability of fallen man to perform any righteousness which can be the matter of his justification in the sight of God ; whereby it will appear, as is observed in this Answer, that we are not accounted righteous in his sight for any thing wrought in us or done by us. That we cannot be justified by suffering the punishment which was due to sin, appears from the infinite evil of it, and the eternal duration of the punishment which it deserves. Thus our Saviour observes in the parable concerning the debtor who did not 'agree with his adversary while in the way,' but was 'delivered to the officer, and cast into prison,' that he should not come out 'till he had paid the uttermost farthing,'^u that is to say, he should never be discharged. A criminal who is sentenced to endure some punishments short of death, or which are to continue but for a term of years, is discharged or justified when he has suffered them. But it is far otherwise with man, when fallen into the hands of the vindictive justice of God. Hence, the psalmist says, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant,' or do not punish me according to the demerit of sin ; 'for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.'—Nor can any one be justified by performing active obedience to the law of God. Nothing is sufficient to answer that end, but what is perfect in all respects. It must be sinless obedience ; and that not only as to what concerns the time to come, but as respecting the time past. But this is impossible from the nature of the thing, to be affirmed of a sinner ; for to affirm it implies a contradiction in terms. Besides, the holiness of God cannot but detest the least defect, and therefore will not deal with a sinful creature as though he had been innocent. As for sins which are past, they render us equally liable to a debt of punishment with those which are committed at present, or shall be hereafter, in the sight of God. Moreover, the honour of the law cannot be secured, unless it be perfectly fulfilled ; and it cannot be so if there be any defect of obedience.

^r Rom. v. 19.

^s Gal. ii. 16.

^t Rom. iii. 26.

^u Matt. v. 25, 26.

As for works which are done by us without the assistance of the Spirit of God, they proceed from a wrong principle, and have many other blemishes attending them, on account of which they have only a partial goodness. For that reason Augustine gives them no better a character than that of shining sins.^x But whatever terms we give them, they are certainly very far from coming up to a conformity to the divine law. And as for good works which are said to be wrought in us, and are the effect of the power and grace of God, and the consequence of our being regenerated and converted, they fall far short of perfection; there is a great deal of sin attending them, which, if God should mark, none could stand. This is expressed by Job, in a very humble manner: ‘How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.’ ‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.’^y When God is said to ‘work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight,’^z we are not to understand that the grace which he works in us renders us accepted in his sight, in a forensic sense, or that it justifies us; for in this respect we are ‘made accepted’ only ‘in the Beloved,’ that is, in Christ.^a—Moreover, as what is wrought in us has many defects; so it is not from ourselves, and therefore cannot be accepted as a payment of that debt of obedience which we owe to the justice of God; and consequently we cannot be justified by it. Some, indeed, make the terms of acceptance or justification in the sight of God as low as if nothing were demanded of us but our sincere endeavours to yield obedience, whatever imperfections it be chargeable with. Others pretend that our confessing our sins will be conducive to our justification, and assert that our tears are sufficient to wash away the guilt of sin. The Papists add that some penances, or acts of self-denial, will satisfy his justice, and procure a pardon for us; yea, they go farther than this, and maintain that persons may perform works of supererogation, or pay more than the debt which is owing from them, or than what the law of God requires, and thereby not only satisfy his justice, but render him a debtor to them; and they put them into a capacity of transferring these arrears of debt to those who stand in need of them, and thereby lay an obligation on them in gratitude to pay them honours next to divine. Such absurdities do men run into who plead for human satisfactions, and the merit of good works, as the matter of our justification. Indeed, nothing can tend more to depreciate Christ’s satisfaction, on the one hand, and stupify the conscience on the other; and therefore, it is so far from being an expedient for justification, that it is destructive to the souls of men.—As for our sincere endeavours or imperfect obedience, these cannot be placed, by the justice of God, in the room of perfect; for to do so is contrary to the nature of justice. We cannot suppose that he who pays a peppercorn or a few mites, instead of a large sum, really pays the debt which was due from him. Justice cannot account this to be a payment; and a discharge from condemnation on the ground of it, cannot be styled a justification. To say that it is esteemed so by an act of grace, is to advance the glory of one divine perfection, and, at the same time, detract from that of another. Nothing, therefore, can be our righteousness, but that which the justice of God may, in honour, accept of for our justification; and our own righteousness is so small and inconsiderable a thing, that it is a dishonour for him to accept of it in this respect; so that we cannot be justified by works done by us or wrought in us.—This will farther appear, if we consider the properties of this righteousness, and in particular, that it must not only be perfect, and therefore such as a sinful creature cannot perform, but also be of infinite value, otherwise it could not give satisfaction to the infinite justice of God, and consequently cannot be performed by any other than a divine person. It must also bear some resemblance to that debt which was due from us; inasmuch as it was designed to satisfy for the debt which we had contracted; and therefore it must be performed by one who is really man. But as this has been insisted on elsewhere, under the head of Christ’s priestly office,^b we shall not farther enlarge on it.

^x Splendida peccata.

^y Job ix. 2, 3, 30—32.

^z Heb. xiii. 21.

^a Eph. i. 6.

^b See Sect. ‘The Necessity of Satisfaction for Sin,’ under Quest. xlv.

Christ's Righteousness as the ground of Justification.

We now proceed to observe that our Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out this righteousness for us, as our surety, by performing active and passive obedience; which is imputed to us for our justification. We have already shown that it is impossible that such a righteousness as is sufficient to be the matter of our justification, should be wrought out by us in our own persons. It must hence be wrought out for us by one who bears the character of a surety, and performs every thing which is necessary to our justification. Such an one is our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Here we must show what we are to understand by 'a surety;' since it is the righteousness of Christ under this relation to us, which is the matter of our justification. A surety is one who submits to be charged with, and undertakes to pay, a debt contracted by another, to the end that the debtor may be discharged. Thus the apostle Paul engages to be surety to Philemon for Onesimus, who had fled from Philemon whom he had wronged or injured, and to whom he was in consequence indebted. Concerning Onesimus, the apostle says, 'If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.'^c We read also of Judah's overture to be surety for his brother Benjamin that he should return to his father, as a motive to induce the latter to give his consent that he should go with him into Egypt: 'I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.'^d Suretiship is so commonly known in civil transactions of a similar nature between man and man, that it needs no farther explication.—It may be observed, however, that a person's becoming surety for another, must be a free and voluntary act. For to force any one to bind himself to pay a debt which he has not contracted, is as much an act of injustice as it is in any other instance to exact a debt where it is not due.—Again, he who engages to be surety for another, must be in a capacity to pay the debt; otherwise he is unjust to the creditor, as well as brings ruin upon himself. Hence, it is said, 'Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts, if thou hast nothing to pay; why should he take away thy bed from under thee?'^e—Further, he who engages to be surety for another, is supposed not to have contracted the debt himself; and therefore the creditor must have no demands upon him, as being involved together with the debtor, and so becoming engaged antecedent to his being surety. Yet after he has become surety he is deemed, in the eye of the law, to stand in the debtor's room and to be charged with his debt, and to be as much obliged to pay it as if he had contracted it, especially if the creditor be resolved to exact the payment of him rather than of the original debtor.^f—Further, as debts are of different kinds, so the obligation of a surety admits of different circumstances. Thus there are pecuniary debts resulting from those dealings or contracts which pass between man and man in civil affairs; and there are debts of service or obedience; as also debts of punishment, as was formerly observed, for crimes committed. In all these cases, as the nature of the debt differs, so there are some things peculiar in the nature of suretiship for it. In pecuniary debts the creditor is obliged to accept of payment at the hand of any one who, at the request of the debtor, is willing to discharge the debt which he has contracted, especially if what he pays be his own; but in debts of service or punishment, when the surety offers himself to perform or suffer what was due from another, the creditor is at liberty to accept or refuse satisfaction from him, and might insist on the payment of the debt in his own person by him from whom it is due.

2. Christ was a surety for us, or substituted in our room,^g with a design to pay the

^c Philem. verse 18.

^d Gen. xliii. 9.

^e Prov. xxii. 26, 27.

^f The distinction is often used in the civil law between 'fide-jussor' and 'expromissor.' A person's being bound together with the original debtor, and the creditor's being left to his liberty to exact the debt of which of the two he pleases, is called 'fide-jussor;' and the surety's so taking the debt upon himself that he who contracted it is discharged, is what we understand by 'expromissor.' This distinction has been considered elsewhere. See Note near the end of Sect. 'The administration of the Covenant under the Old Testament,' under Quest. xxxiii, xxxiv, xxxv.

debt which was due to the justice of God from us.—Here, that we may resume the ideas of a surety just mentioned, and apply them to Christ as our surety, let it be considered that what he did and suffered for us was free and voluntary. This appears from his readiness to engage in the work, expressed by his saying, ‘Lo, I come to do thy will.’^g Hence, whatever he suffered for us did not infer the least injustice in God who inflicted it.^h—Again, he was able to pay the debt; so that there was not the least injury offered to the justice of God by his undertaking. This is evident, from his being God incarnate. In the one nature, he was able to do and suffer whatever was demanded of us; and in the other nature, he was able to add an infinite value to what he performed.—Further, he was not rendered incapable of paying our debt, or of answering for the guilt which we had contracted, by any debt of his own, which involved him in the same guilt and rendered him liable to the same punishment with us. This is evident from what the prophet says concerning him, that he was charged with our guilt, though ‘he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.’ⁱ What the prophet calls ‘doing no violence,’ the apostle Peter, referring to and explaining it, styles ‘doing’ or committing ‘no sin’ of any kind. He was not involved in the guilt of Adam’s sin, which would have rendered him incapable of being a surety to pay that debt for us; nor had he the least degree of corruption of nature, being conceived in an extraordinary way, and sanctified from the womb;^k nor did he ever commit actual sin, for ‘he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.’—Another thing observed in the character of a surety, which corresponds very much with Christ’s being our surety, is that what he engaged to pay was his own, or at his own disposal. He did not offer any injury to justice, by paying a debt which was before due to it, or by performing any service which he had no warrant to do. It is true, he gave his life a ransom; but consider him as a divine Person, and he had an undoubted right to dispose of or lay down that life which he had as man. Did he consent, in the eternal transaction between the Father and him, to be incarnate, and in our nature to perform the work of a surety? This was an act of his sovereign will; so that whatever he paid as a ransom for us, was, in the highest sense, his own. The case was not the same as if one man who has no power to dispose of his life at pleasure, should offer to lay down his life for another. We are not lords of our own lives. As we do not come into the world by our own wills, we are not to go out of it when we please. But Christ as God, was, if I may so express myself, lord of himself, of all that he did and suffered as man; by which I understand that he had a right as God to consent or determine to do and suffer whatever he did and suffered as man. The debt, therefore, which he paid in the human nature, was his own.—Further, as in some cases he who is willing to substitute himself as a surety in the room of the debtor, must be accepted and approved by him to whom the debt is due; so our Saviour’s substitution as our surety in our room, had a sanction from God the Father; who gave many undeniable evidences that what Christ did and suffered for us, was accepted by him as really as if it had been done by us in our own persons. This, as was formerly observed, might have been refused by him, it being the payment of a debt of obedience and sufferings. But that God the Father testified his acceptance of Christ as our surety, appears from his well-pleasedness with him, both before and after his incarnation. Before he came into the world, God seems to speak with pleasure in the forethought of what he would be and do, as Mediator, when he says, ‘Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.’^l He is also said to be ‘well-pleased for his righteousness’ sake,^m or in his determining beforehand that he should, as Mediator, bring in that righteousness which would tend to magnify the law and make it honourable. Moreover, his having anointed him by a previous designation to his work, as the prophet intimates, speaking of him before his incarnation,ⁿ is certainly an evidence of his being approved to be our surety. And when he was incarnate, God approved of him, when engaged in the work which he came into the world to perform. Thus, when he was solemnly set apart by baptism to the discharge of his public ministry,

g Heb. x. 9. h Volenti non fit injuria. i Isa. liii. 9.
presented by Adam,’ under Quest. xxii. l Isa. xlii. 1. m Ver. 21. n Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'^o We may add, that there was the most undeniable proof of God's well-pleasedness with him, as having accomplished this work, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places. Again, that the Father testified his acceptance of Christ as our surety, may be argued from his justifying and saving those for whom he undertook to be a surety, before the debt was actually paid, and from his applying the same blessings to his people since the work of redemption was finished. The application of what Christ undertook to purchase, is an evidence of the acceptableness of the price. This may be considered, either as respects those who were saved before his incarnation and death, or those who are, from that time, in all succeeding ages, made partakers of the saving benefits of redemption. Before the actual accomplishment of what he undertook to do and suffer as our surety, God the Father trusted him; and, by virtue of his promising to pay the debt, discharged the Old Testament saints from condemnation, as effectually as if it had been actually paid. There are some cases in which a surety's undertaking to pay a debt, is reckoned equivalent to the actual payment of it; namely, when it is impossible that he should make a failure in the payment, either through mutability or fickleness of temper inducing him to change his purpose, or from unfaithfulness, which might render him regardless of his engagement, or from some change in his circumstances, whereby, though he once was able to pay, he afterwards becomes unable: I say, if none of these things can take place, and especially, if the creditor, by not demanding present payment, receives some advantage, which is an argument that he does not stand in need of payment, then the promise to pay a debt is equivalent to the payment of it. Now these things may well be applied to Christ's undertaking to pay our debt. It was impossible that he should fail in the accomplishment of what he had undertaken; or change his purpose, and so, though he designed to execute his work, enter into other measures; or, though he had promised to execute it, be unfaithful in the accomplishment of it;—these things are all inconsistent with the character of his person; for though he suffered for us in the human nature, it was his divine nature that undertook to do the work in the human nature; and the divine nature is infinitely free from the least imputation of weakness, mutability, or unfaithfulness. While, too, the present payment was not immediately demanded, nor designed to be made till the fulness of time was come, the delay of it was compensated by the revenue of glory which accrued to the divine name, and by the honour which redounded to the Mediator, in the salvation of the elect before his incarnation. This, then, was certainly an undeniable evidence of God's approving his undertaking. Moreover, since the work of redemption has been completed, all those who are or shall be brought to glory, have, in themselves, a convincing proof of God's being well-pleased with Christ, as substituted in their room and stead, to pay the debt which was due from them to his justice, and so to lay the foundation of their justification. It hence plainly appears, that Christ was substituted as a surety in our room and stead, to do that for us which was necessary for our justification. We have also sufficient ground to conclude that he was so from scripture, whence alone this point can be proved, it being a matter of pure revelation. Thus it is said, in express terms, that he was 'made a surety of a better testament.'^p And that, as our surety, he paid the debt of sufferings which was due from us, is evident from its being said that 'he offered himself a sacrifice for our sins,'^q and that he was 'once offered to bear the sins of many.'^r From his being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, the apostle argues that he had no occasion to offer a sacrifice for himself, or that he had no sin of his own to be charged with; so that, when he suffered, he bore or answered for our sins. Thus the apostle Peter says, 'He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; by whose stripes ye were healed.'^s And elsewhere we read of 'his being made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;'^t that is, he who had no guilt of his own to answer for, submitted to be charged with our guilt, to stand in our room and

^o Matt. iii. 17.
^r Heb. ix. 28.

^p Heb. vii. 22.
^s 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^q Ver. 27.
^t 2 Cor. v. 21.

stead, and accordingly to be made a sacrifice for sin. Now all this implies his having been made a surety for us. But on this point we particularly insisted elsewhere when speaking concerning Christ's satisfaction, which could not be explained without taking occasion to mention his being substituted in the room and stead of those for whom he paid a price of redemption; and we also considered the meaning of those scriptures which speak of his 'bearing our sins.'^u

3. We shall now proceed, then, to consider what Christ did as our surety, in his paying all that debt which the justice of God demanded from us, and which consisted in active and passive obedience. There was a debt of active obedience demanded of man as a creature; and upon his failing to pay it, when he sinned, it became an outstanding debt due from us, but such as could never be paid by us. God determines not to justify any, unless this outstanding debt be paid. Christ, as our surety, engages to take the payment of it on himself. While, too, this defect of obedience, together with all actual transgressions, which proceed from the corruption of our nature, render us guilty or liable to the stroke of vindictive justice, Christ, as our surety, undertakes to bear that also. This we generally call the imputation of our sin to Christ, the placing of our debt to his account, and the transferring to him of the debt of punishment which was due from us. On this account he is said to yield obedience, and suffer in our room and stead, or to perform active and passive obedience for us. These two ideas the apostle joins in one expression, when he says that he 'became obedient unto death.'^x But this having been insisted on elsewhere, under the head of Christ's satisfaction,^y where we not only showed that Christ performed active as well as passive obedience for us, but endeavoured to answer the objections which are generally brought against Christ's active obedience being part of that debt which he engaged to pay for us, we shall pass it by at present.—Again, that our sin and guilt was imputed to him, may be argued from his having been 'made a curse for us,' in order to his redeeming us from the curse of the law;^z from his having been 'made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him';^a and from other scriptures which speak of him as suffering, though innocent,—punished for sin, though he was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish,—dealt with as guilty, though he had never contracted any guilt,—and made a sacrifice for sin, though sinless. These things could not have been done consistently with the justice of God, had not our sins been placed to his account, or imputed to him.—It is indeed a very difficult thing to convince some persons, how Christ could be charged with sin or have sin imputed to him, in consistency with the sinless purity of his nature. This some think to be no better than a contradiction; though it is agreeable to the scripture mode of speaking, as 'he was made sin for us,' and yet 'knew no sin.'^b When, however, we speak of sin being imputed to him, we are far from insinuating that he committed any acts of sin, or that his human nature was, in the least, inclined to or defiled by it. We choose, therefore, to use the scripture phrase, in which he is said to have 'borne our sins,' rather than to say that he was a sinner. Much less would I give countenance to the expression which some make use of, that he was the greatest sinner in the world; for I do not desire to apply a word to him, which is often taken in a sense not in the least applicable to the holy Jesus. We cannot be too cautious in our expressions, lest the most common sense in which we understand 'the greatest sinner' when applied to men, should give any one a wrong idea of him, as though he had committed sin, or were defiled with it. All we assert is, that he was charged with our sins when he suffered for them,—not with having committed them, but with the guilt of them, which, by his own consent, was imputed to him. For had it been otherwise, his sufferings could not have been a punishment for sin, nor could our sin have been expiated, or his sufferings have been the ground of our justification.

4. We are thus led to consider the reference which Christ's suretiship-righteousness has to our justification. This is generally styled its being imputed, which

^u See Sect. 'The Reality of the Atonement,' under Quest. xliv.

^x Phil. ii. 8.

^y See Sect. 'The Nature of the Satisfaction required,' under Quest. xliv.

^z Gal. iii. 13.

^a 2 Cor. v. 21.

^b Ibid.

is a word very much used by those who plead for the scripture sense of the doctrine of justification, and as much opposed by those who deny it. We are obliged to defend the use of it; otherwise Christ's righteousness, how glorious soever it be in itself, would not avail for our justification.

Here it is necessary for us to explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. There are some who oppose this doctrine by calling it a putative righteousness, the shadow or appearance of what has no reality; or our being accounted what we are not, whereby a wrong judgment is passed on persons and things. We are not, however, to deny the doctrine because it is thus misrepresented, and thereby unfairly opposed. It is certain that there are words used in scripture and often applied to this doctrine, which, without any ambiguity or strain on the sense of them, may be translated 'to reckon,' 'to account,' or to place a thing done by another to our account, or as we express it, 'to impute.'^c This respects either what is done by us, or something done by another for us. Imputation in the former of these senses, our adversaries do not oppose. Thus, it is said, that 'Phinehas executed judgment, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,'^d that is, it was approved by God as a righteous action. This expression seems to obviate an objection which some might make against imputation. They might suppose that Phinehas did that which more properly belonged to the civil magistrate, or that his judicial act was done without a formal trial, and, it may be, too hastily. God, however, owns the action, and, in a way of approbation, places it to his account for righteousness, that it should be reckoned a righteous action throughout all generations.—Again, sometimes that which is done by a person, is imputed to him or charged upon him so that he must answer for it, or suffer the punishment due to it. Thus Shimei says to David, 'Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me ;'^e that is, 'Do not charge upon me that sin which I committed, so as to put me to death for it, which thou mightest justly do.' And Stephen prays, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ;'^f that is, impute it not to them, or inflict not the punishment on them which it deserves. No one can deny that what is done by a person himself may be placed to his own account; so that he may be rewarded or punished for it, or that it may be approved or disapproved. This, however, is not the sense in which we understand imputation, when speaking concerning the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; for this supposes that what was done by another is placed to our account. This is the main thing which is denied by those who have other sentiments of the doctrine we are maintaining. They pretend that, for God to account Christ's righteousness ours, is to take a wrong estimate of things, to reckon that done by us which was not. This, they say, is contrary to the wisdom of God, who can, by no means, entertain any false ideas of things; and they add, that, if the action be reckoned ours, the character of the person performing it must also be applied to us,—which is to make us sharers in Christ's mediatorial office and glory. But this is the most perverse sense which can be put on the words, and a setting of this doctrine in such a light as no one takes it in who pleads for it. We do not suppose that God looks upon man with his all-seeing eye, as having done that which Christ did, or as sustaining the character which belonged to him in doing it. We are always reckoned by him as offenders, or as contracting guilt, and unable to do any thing which can make an atonement for it. Hence, what interest soever we have in what Christ did, is not reputed our action. God's imputing Christ's righteousness to us, is to be understood in a forensic sense; which is agreeable to the idea of a debt being paid by a surety. It is not supposed that the debtor paid the debt which the surety paid; yet the payment of it is placed to his account, or imputed to him as really as if he had made it himself. So, what Christ did and suffered in our room and stead, is as much placed to our account as if we had done and suffered it ourselves; so that we are, in consequence, discharged from condemnation.

This is the sense in which we understand the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; and it is agreeable to the account we have in scripture. Thus we are said to be 'made the righteousness of God in him ;'^g that is, the abstract being put

c חשב לגזל.

d Psal. cvi. 31.

e 2 Sam. xix. 19.

f Acts vii. 60.

g 2 Cor. v. 2

for the concrete, we are denominated and dealt with as righteous persons, acquitted and discharged from condemnation in virtue of what was done by him. Elsewhere, also, he is styled 'the Lord our righteousness.' The apostle, too, speaks of his 'having Christ's righteousness;' ^h that is, having it imputed to him, or having an interest in it, or being dealt with according to the tenor of it. In this respect, he opposes it to that righteousness which was in himself as the result of his own performances. Again, Christ is said to be 'made of God unto us righteousness;' that is, his fulfilling the law is placed to our account. Further, the apostle speaks of 'Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;' ⁱ which is the same as what he asserts in other words elsewhere, concerning 'the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us,' ^k who could not be justified by our own obedience to it, 'in that it was weak through the flesh,' or by reason of our fallen state. Christ, therefore, performed obedience for us, and accordingly God deals with us as if we had fulfilled the law in our own persons, inasmuch as it was fulfilled by him as our surety.—This may farther be illustrated, by what we generally understand by Adam's sin being imputed to us, as one contrary may illustrate another. As sin and death entered into the world by 'the offence of one,' namely, the first Adam, 'in whom all have sinned; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift,' ^l that is, eternal life, 'came upon all men,' namely, those who shall be saved, 'unto justification of life.' For this reason the apostle speaks of Adam as 'the figure of him that was to come.' ^m Now, as Adam's sin was imputed to us as our public head and representative, so that we are involved in the guilt of it, or fall in him; so Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, as he was our public head and surety. Accordingly, in the eye of the law, that which was done by him was the same as if it had been done by us; so that, as the effect and consequence of it, we are justified. This is what we call Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, or placed to our account; and it is very agreeable to the acceptance of the word, in dealings between man and man. When one has contracted a debt, and desires that it may be placed to the account of his surety, who undertakes for the payment of it, it is said to be imputed to him; and the debtor's consequent discharge is as valid as if he had paid it in his own person.

Justification an Act of God's Free Grace.

We shall now consider justification as an act of God's free grace. This point is particularly insisted on in one of the Answers we are explaining. We are not to suppose, however, that our being justified by an act of grace, is opposed to our being justified on account of a full satisfaction made by our surety to the justice of God; in which respect we consider our discharge from condemnation as an act of justice. The debtor is, indeed, beholden to the grace of God for this privilege; but the surety who paid the debt, had not the least abatement made, but was obliged to glorify the justice of God to the utmost, which accordingly he did. Yet, there are several things in which the grace of God is eminently displayed.

1. It is displayed in God's willingness to accept satisfaction from the hands of our surety. He might have demanded the satisfaction of ourselves. The debt which we had contracted was not of the same nature with pecuniary debts; in which case the creditor is obliged to accept payment, though the offer of it is made by another and not by him who contracted the debt. But, in debts of obedience to be performed or of punishment to be endured, he to whom satisfaction is to be given, must of his free choice accept one to be substituted in the room of him from whom the obedience or sufferings were originally due, otherwise the overture made, or what is done and suffered by the substitute, is not regarded, or available to procure a discharge for him in whose room he substituted himself. God might have exacted the debt of us, in our own persons; and then our condition would have been equally miserable with that of fallen angels, for whom no mediator was accepted, no more than provided.

2. The grace of God farther appears in having provided a surety for us. We

^h Phil. iii. 9.

ⁱ Rom. x. 4.

^k Chap. viii. 3, 4.

^l Chap. v. 18.

^m Ver. 14.

could not have provided a surety for ourselves, nor have engaged Him to be so who was the only person that could bring about the great work of our redemption. The only creatures who are capable of performing perfect obedience are the holy angels. These, however, could not be our surety; for, as was formerly observed, whoever performs it must be incarnate, that he may be capable of paying, in some respects in kind, the debt which was due from us. He requires, therefore, to suffer death, and consequently to have a nature which is capable of dying. But this the angels had not, and could not have, but by the divine will. Besides, if God should have dispensed with that part of satisfaction which consists in subjection to death, and have declared that active obedience should be sufficient to procure our justification, the angels, though capable of performing active obedience, would, notwithstanding, have been defective in it; so that justice could not, in honour, have accepted it, any more than it could have dispensed with the obligation to perform obedience in general. It would not have been of infinite value; and it is the value of things which justice regards, and not merely the matter or perfection of them in other respects. Hence, the obedience must have had in it something infinitely valuable, else it could not have been accepted by God, as a price of redemption, in order to the procuring of our justification; and such an obedience could be performed by none but our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious author and procurer of this privilege.

It was impossible for man to have found out this Mediator or surety. The appointment of him had its origin with God, and not with us. It is he who found a ransom, and laid help upon one that is mighty. This was the result of his will. Hence, our Saviour is represented as saying, 'Lo, I come to do thy will.'ⁿ That we could not, by any means, have found out this surety, or engaged him to have done that for us which was necessary for our justification, will evidently appear if we consider that, when man fell, the Son of God was not incarnate. Even if we allow that fallen man had some idea of a trinity of persons, in the unity of the divine essence,—and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had, since it was necessary that this doctrine should be revealed to him in order to his performing acceptable worship; yet, can any one suppose that man could have asked such a favour of a divine person, as to take his nature, and put himself in his room and stead, and expose himself to the curse of that law which he had violated? Such a thing could never have entered into his heart; yea, the very thought, if it had taken its rise from him, would have savoured of more presumption than had he entreated that God would pardon his sin without a satisfaction. But if he had supposed it possible for the Son of God to be incarnate, or had conjectured that there had been the least probability of his being willing to express this instance of condescending goodness, how could he have known that God would accept the payment of our debt at the hands of another, or commend his love to us who were such enemies to him, in not sparing him but delivering him up for us? If God's accepting a satisfaction, as well as the perfection or infinite value of it, be necessary in order to its taking effect; it is certain, man could not have known that he would have done it, for this was a matter of pure revelation. Moreover, should we suppose even this possible, or that man might have expected that God would be moved by entreaty to appoint and accept the satisfaction; yet such was the corruption, perverseness, and rebellion of man's nature as fallen, and so great was his inability to perform any act of worship, that he could not have addressed himself to God in a right manner, to entreat that he would admit of a surety. Besides, God cannot hear any prayer but that which is offered to him by faith; which supposes a Mediator, whose purchase and gift it is. Now, as the sinful creature could not plead with God by faith that he would send his Son to be a Mediator, how could he hope to obtain this blessing? It evidently follows, then, that, as man could not give satisfaction for himself, so he could not find out any one who could or would give it for him. Hence, the grace of God, in the provision which he has made of such a surety as his own Son, unasked for, unthought of, as well as undeserved, is very illustrious.

3. It was a very great display of grace in our Saviour, that he was pleased to

consent to perform this work for us. Without his consent the justice of God could not have exacted the debt of him. He being perfectly innocent, could not be obliged to suffer punishment; and it would have been unjust in God to have inflicted it, had he not been willing to be charged with our guilt, and to stand in our room and stead. Though, too, he knew beforehand all the difficulties, sorrows, and temptations which he was to meet with in the discharge of this work, he was not discouraged from undertaking it. Nor was he unapprized of the character of those for whom he undertook it. He knew their rebellion and the guilt contracted by it, which rendered satisfaction necessary in order to their salvation. He knew also that they would, notwithstanding all the engagements he might lay on them to the contrary, discover the greatest ingratitude toward him; that, instead of improving so great a display of condescending goodness, they would neglect the great salvation when purchased by him; and that, in consequence, they would appear to be his greatest enemies, notwithstanding his friendship to them, unless he engaged not only to purchase redemption for them, but to apply it to them, and to work those graces in them whereby they might be enabled to give him the glory which is due to him for his great undertaking.

We are next led to consider the use of faith in justification, and how, notwithstanding what has been said concerning our being justified by Christ's righteousness, we may, in other respects, be said to be justified by faith; and also to show what this faith is, whereby we are justified. These subjects being particularly insisted on in the two following Answers, we proceed to consider them.

THE CONNECTION OF FAITH WITH JUSTIFICATION.

QUESTION LXXII. *What is justifying Faith?*

ANSWER. Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself, and all other creatures, to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.

QUESTION LXXIII. *How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?*

ANSWER. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God; not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it; nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument, by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness.

As the latter of these Answers, in which faith is considered as that whereby a sinner is justified, seems better connected with what has been before insisted on in explaining the doctrine of justification, we choose to discuss it before discussing the former. In considering the account which it gives of justifying faith, there are two things which may be taken notice of. First, it is observed that, though there are other graces which always accompany faith and the good works which flow from it, none of these are said to justify a sinner in the sight of God. Next, we have a statement of how faith justifies, or what it is to be justified by faith.

Other Graces than Faith do not Justify.

We observe, then, that though there are other graces which always accompany faith and the good works which flow from it, none of these are said to justify a sinner in the sight of God. There is an inseparable connection between faith and all other graces; and, though it is distinguished, it is never separate from them. They are all considered as 'fruits of the Spirit.' The apostle reckons up several graces which are connected with faith and proceed from the same Spirit, such as 'love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance.' The

same apostle commends the church at Thessalonica for their 'work of faith;' and considers this as connected with a 'labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.'^p The apostle Peter exhorts the church to which he writes to 'add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity;'^q which supposes that all these graces ought to be connected together. The apostle James calls that a 'dead faith'^r which has not other works or graces joined with it. Indeed, these graces not only are connected with it, but flow from it, or are the fruits of it. Thus we read of 'the heart being purified by faith';^s that is, this grace, when exercised in a right manner, will have a tendency, in some degree, to purge the soul from that moral impurity which proceeds out of the heart of man, and is inconsistent with saving faith. Elsewhere, also, we read of faith as 'working by love,'^t that is, exciting those acts of love, both to God and man, which contain a summary of practical religion. It is likewise said to 'overcome the world';^u and it enables Christians to do or suffer great things for Christ's sake, of which the apostle gives various instances in the Old Testament saints.^x But notwithstanding the connection of other graces with faith, and with those works which flow from it, we are never said in scripture to be justified by these graces,—not by love to God, nor by any acts of obedience to him, which can be called no other than works. On the contrary, when the apostle speaks of our justification by faith, he puts it in opposition to works. 'A man,' says he, 'is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.'^y

It is objected that the apostle here speaks concerning the ceremonial law, which he excludes from being the matter of our justification; and not the moral law, or any evangelical duty, such as love and sincere obedience, which, together with faith, is the matter of our justification. We reply that, when the apostle speaks of our justification by faith, without the deeds of the law, he does not intend the ceremonial law; for those whom he describes as justified persons are said, in a following verse, to be not Jews only, but Gentiles who were converted to the Christian faith. The former, indeed, were under a temptation to seek to be justified by the ceremonial law, and so to conclude that they had a right to eternal life because of their being distinguished from the world, by the external privileges of the covenant which they were under, many of which were contained in or signified by that law; but the Gentiles had nothing to do with it, and therefore never expected to be justified by the ceremonial law. Accordingly, when the apostle speaks of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, he cannot be supposed to intend the ceremonial law. Besides, if we look a little farther into the context, we shall find by his reasoning, that he excludes all works in general, and opposes faith to them. He argues that we are justified in such a way as tends to exclude boasting. But he who insists on any works performed by himself as the matter of his justification, cannot do so any otherwise than in a boasting way, valuing himself, and founding his right to eternal life, upon them. We are justified therefore, not by them, but by faith; that is, we are justified in such a way that, while we lay claim to the greatest privileges from Christ, we are disposed to give him all the glory, or to renounce our own righteousness at the same time that we have recourse by faith to his righteousness for justification.

That it may farther appear that our justification by faith is opposed to justification by works, either those which accompany or those which flow from it, we may apply to this argument what was formerly suggested, in considering the matter of our justification. If we consider the demands of justice, or what it may in honour reckon a sufficient compensation for the dishonour which has been brought to the divine name by sin, or what may be deemed a satisfactory payment of the outstanding debt of perfect obedience which was due from us, or of punishment to which we were liable according to the sanction of the divine law; we may easily infer that no obedience performed by us, though including the utmost perfection which a fallen creature is capable of attaining, is a sufficient satisfaction; and if

p 1 Thess. i. 3.
t Gal. v. 6.

q 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.
u 1 John v. 4.

r James ii. 17.
x Heb. xi.

s Acts xv. 9.
y Rom. iii. 28.

there can be no justification without satisfaction, we cannot be justified by such obedience. It is a vain thing, therefore, for persons to distinguish between works done before and after faith, as though the former only were excluded from being the matter of our justification ; or to say, as some do, that we are justified not indeed by obedience to the moral law, but by our obeying the precepts which our Saviour has laid down in the gospel, such as faith, repentance, &c., which they call obedience to the gospel as a new law. Let it be observed that these evangelical duties are supposed to be performed as the result of a divine command, which has the formal nature of a law, whether they be contained in the moral law or not ; so that, when we are justified by faith in opposition to the works of the law, obedience of any kind performed by us must be excluded. This point appears farther from the nature of faith, to which justification by the works of the law is opposed. For faith is a soul-humbling grace, and includes a renouncing of all merit, or inducement taken from ourselves as a reason why God should bestow upon us the blessings we stand in need of. It trusts in Christ for righteousness, and in him alone ; and therefore turns itself from any thing which may have the least tendency to eclipse his glory, as the only foundation of our justification. Hence, when we are said to be justified by faith, and not by the works of the law, the meaning is, that we are justified in such a way as tends to set the crown upon Christ's head, acknowledging him to be the only fountain whence this privilege is derived.

From what has been said, it follows that our justification cannot be founded on our repentance. That it is founded on repentance, is often maintained by those who are on the other side of the question. They suppose that justification contains nothing else but forgiveness of sin ; and that, if offences are to be forgiven by men upon their repentance or confessing their fault, then forgiveness may be expected from God on our repentance. Some use a very unsavoury way of speaking, when they say that our tears have a virtue to wash away our sins. That they may gain farther countenance to their opinions, they refer to the scripture in which it is said, ' Repent, that your sins may be blotted out ; ' ^z and to other scriptures of a similar nature. We are not to suppose, however, that, in the text just quoted, the apostle means that forgiveness of sin is founded on our repentance, as the matter of our justification in the sight of God ; but we are to understand him as teaching that there is an inseparable connection between our claim to forgiveness of sin, together with all the fruits and effects of the death of Christ whereby this blessing was procured, and repentance,—so that the one is not to be expected without the other. While men are to forgive injuries when the offender acknowledges his fault and makes sufficient restitution, they may do so as far as the offence is committed only against a creature,—especially if the offence be of a private nature. But in juridical and forensic cases, will any one say that the prince is obliged to forgive the criminal who is under a sentence of condemnation, because he is sorry for what he has done, or confesses his fault ? Would his doing so secure his honour as a lawgiver ? And if, upon his pardoning the offender, the latter were to be discharged from his guilt, would there not be a defect in the administration of the legislature ? How, then, can the principle of pardoning on the ground of repentance be applied to forgiveness as expected at the hand of God ? Here justice as well as mercy is to have the glory which is due to it ; and we are to be not only acquitted, but justified, or pronounced guiltless. How, then, can forgiveness be expected, when our acknowledgment of our offence cannot be reckoned a sufficient satisfaction to the justice of God ?

It is objected by those on the other side of the question, that, though repentance be not in itself a sufficient compensation to the justice of God, for the crimes which we have committed ; yet God may, by an act of grace, accept it as if it had been sufficient.^a This they illustrate by a similitude taken from a person's selling an estate of a considerable value, to one who has no money to buy it, provided he will

^z Acts iii. 19.

^a This is what is generally styled, by a diminutive word, '*Acceptilatio gratiosa*,' which is an accepting a small part of a debt, instead of the whole ; a sort of composition, in which, though the payment be inconsiderable, the debtor's discharge is founded on it by an act of favour in the creditor, as if the whole sum had been paid.

pay a peppercorn of acknowledgment. Thus, say they, how insignificant soever repentance, or any other grace which is deemed the matter of our justification, be in itself, it is by an act of favour, deemed a sufficient price. Now, I would observe, that the objection which was formerly brought against the doctrine we have been maintaining, concerning the imputation of Christ's righteousness, namely, that it is a putative righteousness, a not judging of things according to truth, and the like, seems to be of no weight when it affects their own cause; otherwise we might turn their argument against themselves, and ask them whether it be for God to judge according to truth, when that is accepted as a sufficient payment, by his justice, which is in itself of no value? But passing this by, we may farther observe that their supposition wholly sets aside the necessity of satisfaction, as the Socinians do; so that it is no wonder that the latter make use of the supposition. As for others who do not altogether deny the doctrine of satisfaction, yet think that a small price may be deemed satisfactory for sin committed, it may be replied to them, that if justification, as tending to advance the glory of divine justice in taking away the guilt of sin, depends upon a price paid which is equivalent to the debt contracted, and if nothing short of a price of infinite value can be reckoned such an equivalent, then certainly that which is performed by men cannot be deemed a sufficient payment, or accepted as such. It is a vain thing for persons to pretend that there is a difference between satisfying God, and satisfying his justice, or that to satisfy God is to pay a price which he demands, be it never so small, while satisfying justice is paying a price equal to the thing purchased; for we must conclude that God cannot deem any thing satisfactory to himself, which is not so to his justice. This distinction, therefore, will not avail to free their argument from the absurdity which attends it.

We might here observe, that as some speak of pardon of sin being founded on our repentance, others speak of our justification being by the act of faith, or by faith considered as a work. In defending justification by works, as if, contrary to what has been already proved, it were not opposed to justification by faith, they argue that we are often said in scripture to be justified by faith, that faith is a work, and that, therefore, it cannot be denied that we are justified by works. But it is one thing to say, that we are justified by faith, that is, a work, and another thing to say, that we are justified by it as a work; or, it is one thing to say, that we are justified for our faith, and another thing to say, that we are justified by it. This will more evidently appear under the following Head.

How Faith Justifies.

We therefore proceed to consider what it is for us to be justified by faith, or how faith justifies. None can, with the least shadow of reason, deny that justification by faith is a scripture mode of speaking. Some, indeed, have questioned whether the apostle's words, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' give countenance to the doctrine of justification by faith; for they observe that, by putting a stop immediately after the word justified, the sense would be, that they who are justified by Christ's righteousness, have peace with God by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ. But though this will a little alter the reading of the text; it will not overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith as contained in it. For if we understand our 'having peace with God,' as importing, not merely peace of conscience, but that peace which they have a right to who are interested in Christ's righteousness, it will follow that to have this peace by faith, is, in effect, the same as to be justified by faith. This farther appears from the following words, 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.' The 'grace wherein we stand' is that grace which is the foundation of our justification, and not merely peace of conscience. When, therefore, we have access by faith into this grace, it is the same as for us to be justified by faith.—Moreover, this is not the only place in which we are said to be justified by faith. The apostle says elsewhere, 'We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ,'^b

or, by faith in Jesus Christ. Again, he says, 'The just shall live by faith;' ^c which, agreeably to the context, must be understood of their being justified by faith; in which sense he particularly explains the words elsewhere. ^d In another place he speaks of 'the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ;' ^e and also of a believer's 'waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith.' ^f We must, therefore, not deny that justification is by faith; but rather explain the sense of those scriptures which establish this doctrine, agreeably to the mind of the Holy Ghost in them.

There are various methods taken to explain the doctrine of justification by faith; particularly one which we think subversive of justification by Christ's righteousness; and another, that which is contained in the Answer which we are explaining.

1. As to the former of these, namely, that which is inconsistent with the doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness, it is maintained by those who plead for justification by works. They say that we are justified by faith and all other graces; and these they call the conditions of our justification in the sight of God. Indeed, to be justified by faith, according to them, is little other than to be justified for faith. Whether they reckon it a meritorious condition or not, they must own it to be a pleadable condition, otherwise it would have no reference to justification; and if it be understood in this sense, our justification depends as much upon it as if it had been meritorious. This is the account which some give of justification. To prepare the way for their opinion, they suppose that the terms of salvation in the gospel, which are substituted for those which were required under the first covenant made with Adam, are faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, instead of perfect; that God, in justifying a penitent, believing sinner, pursuant to the performance of these conditions, declares his willingness that there should be a relaxation of that law which man was at first obliged to obey; and, accordingly, that sincerity is demanded by him instead of perfection, or is substituted in the room of it. This some of them call the new law, and others a remedial law. Hence, according to their opinion, instead of being justified by Christ's yielding perfect obedience, or paying the outstanding debt which we were obliged, by reason of the violation of the first covenant, to pay; we are to be justified by our own imperfect obedience. What may be objected to this reasoning, is, that it is inconsistent with the holiness of the divine nature, and the glory of the justice of God, detracts from the honour of his law, and is, in effect, to maintain that we are justified without satisfaction given. For though the alleged terms of our justification and acceptance in the sight of God may be falsely styled a valuable consideration; yet none will pretend to assert that they are an infinite price; and nothing short of such a price, which is no other than Christ's righteousness, is sufficient to answer the end of satisfaction. I am sensible that they who lay down this plan of justification allege in defence of it, that, though the terms of acceptance are of small value in themselves, yet God, by an act of grace, reckons the payment of a small debt equivalent to that of a greater, as was formerly observed. They also speak of faith and repentance as having a value set upon them by their reference to the blood of Christ, ^g who merited the privilege for us of our being justified in such a way, or upon these conditions performed. They call them indeed easier terms or conditions, and include them all in the general word sincerity, instead of perfection. Yet they are somewhat divided in their method of explaining themselves. Some suppose these conditions to be wholly in our own power, without the aids of divine grace, as much as perfect obedience was in the power of our first parents. Others, though they do not suppose that these conditions are altogether out of our own power, ascribe a little more to the grace of God, according as they explain the doctrine of effectual calling; and they so far lay a foundation for the sinner's glorying, as to suppose that our right to justification and eternal life are founded on performing the conditions.

I cannot but think that this method of explaining the doctrine of justification is

c Rom. i. 17.

d Gal. iii. 11.

e Rom. iii. 22.

f Gal. v. 5.

g These works they speak of as 'Tincta sanguine Christi.'

subversive of the gospel; and that it is highly derogatory to the glory of God to assert that he can dispense with the demand of perfect obedience, and justify a person on easier terms. To say this is little better than what the apostle calls 'making void the law.' This, says he, we are far from doing 'by faith,' or by our asserting the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness; 'but we rather establish it' hereby. Moreover, to say that God sets such a value on our performing these conditions of the new covenant that they are deemed equivalent to Christ's performing perfect obedience for us, reflects on his glory, as set forth to be a propitiation for sin to declare God's righteousness in the remission of it, and detracts from the obligation which we are laid under to him for what he did and suffered in our behalf for our justification.—Again, to assert that God sets this value on our performances pursuant to Christ's merit, or that they are highly esteemed by him because they are tinged with his blood, is contrary to the design of Christ's death. For that design was, not that such an estimate might be set on what is done by us, but rather that the iniquities which attend our best performances may be forgiven,—that, though, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we may be made accepted in the Beloved,—and that, having no justifying righteousness of our own, we may be justified by that which he hath wrought out for us, and glory in it.—As to the supposition that faith, repentance, and new obedience are not only conditions of justification, but conditions easy to be performed, it plainly discovers that they who maintain it, either think too lightly of man's impotency and aversion to what is good, and of his alienation from the life of God, or are strangers to their own hearts, and not duly sensible that it is God that works in his people both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.—The only thing which I shall add, in opposition to the doctrine of justification by works, is, that whatever is the matter or ground of our justification in the sight of God, must be pleadable at his bar. For we cannot be justified without a plea; and if any plea taken from our own works be thought sufficient, how much soever the proud and deluded heart of man may set too great a value upon them, God will not reckon the plea valid, so as to discharge us from guilt, and give us on account of it a right and title to eternal life.

2. We now proceed to consider the method taken in the Answer before us, to explain the doctrine of justification by faith. This method, we think, is agreeable to the divine perfections, and contains a true state of the doctrine in question. We formerly considered justification as a forensic act, that we might understand what is meant by our sins being imputed to Christ our head and surety, and his righteousness imputed to us, or placed to our account. And we are now to speak of this righteousness as pleaded by or applied to us, as the foundation of our claim to all the blessings which were purchased by it. Here we must consider a sinner as bringing in his plea, in order to his discharge; and he does this either with the view of being declared innocent, or with the view of being justified on the ground of Christ's righteousness.

If he be charged by men or by Satan with crimes not committed, he pleads his own innocency; if charged with hypocrisy, he pleads his own sincerity. In this sense, we are to understand several expressions in scripture. When, for example, a charge of the kind mentioned was brought against Job, Satan having suggested that he did not serve God for nought, and that, if God would touch his bone and his flesh, he would curse him to his face, and his friends having often applied to him the character they give of the hypocrite, and so concluded him to be a wicked person, he said, 'God forbid that I should justify you,' that is, that I should acknowledge your charge to be just. 'Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;' ^h that is, 'I never will own what you insinuate, that my heart is not right with God.' David, also, when complaining of the ill treatment which he met with from his enemies and persecutors, who desired not only to 'tread down his life upon the earth,' but to 'lay his honour in the dust,' to murder his name as well as his person, prays, 'Judge me, O Lord, according to

^h Job xxvii. 5, 6.

my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.'ⁱ What could he plead against malicious and false insinuations, but his righteousness or his integrity? Elsewhere, also, when he says, 'The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me; for I have kept the ways of the Lord; his judgments were before me; I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity,'^k his words are nothing else but an intimation that, how much soever he might be charged with the contrary vices, he was, as regarded them, innocent. Though God did not justify him at his tribunal for his personal righteousness; yet, in the course of his providence, he seemed so far to approve his plea, that, whatever the world thought of him, he plainly dealt with him as one who was highly favoured by him, or as one whom, by his dealings with him, he evidently distinguished from those whose hearts were not right with him. It is true, some who plead for justification by our own righteousness, allege these scriptures as a proof of it; but they do not distinguish between the justification of our persons in the sight of God, and the justification of our righteous cause, or between our being justified when accused at God's tribunal, and our being justified or vindicated from those charges which are brought against us at man's.

When a person stands at God's tribunal, as we must suppose the sinner to do, when bringing in his plea for justification in his sight, he has nothing to plead but Christ's righteousness; and faith is the grace which pleads it. On this account, we are said to be justified by faith, or in a way of believing. Faith does not justify by presenting or pleading itself, or any other grace which accompanies or flows from it, as the cause why God should forgive sin, or give us a right to eternal life; for no grace has a sufficient worth or excellency to procure these blessings. When we are said to be justified by faith, it is by faith as apprehending, pleading, or laying hold on Christ's righteousness. This gives occasion to divines to call it the instrument of our justification. Christ's righteousness is the thing claimed or apprehended; and faith is that by which it is claimed or apprehended. Agreeably to the idea of an instrument, we are said to be justified, not for faith, but by it. Christ's righteousness is that which procures a discharge from condemnation for all for whom it was wrought out; and faith is the hand which receives it, whereby a person has a right to conclude that it was wrought out for him. Christ's righteousness is that which has a tendency to enrich and adorn the soul; and faith is the hand which receives it, whereby it becomes ours in a way of fiducial application. As the righteousness of Christ is compared, in scripture, to a glorious robe which renders the soul beautiful, or is its highest and chief ornament; so it is by faith that this robe is put on. Thus its beauty, as the prophet says, is rendered 'perfect through his comeliness, which is put upon him.'^l Hence, Christ's righteousness justifies, as it is the cause of our discharge; faith justifies as the instrument which applies this discharge to us. Accordingly, when it is said, 'The just shall live by faith,' faith is considered as that which seeks and finds life in him. The effect is, by a metonymy, applied to the instrument; as when the husbandman is said to live or be maintained by his plough, and the artist to live by his hands, or the beggar by his empty hand which receives the donative. If a person were in a dungeon, as the prophet Jeremiah was, and a rope were let down to draw him out, his laying hold on it is the instrument, but the hand which draws him out is the principal cause of his release. Or, that we may make use of a similitude which more directly illustrates the doctrine we are maintaining, suppose a condemned malefactor had a pardon procured for him, which gives him a right to liberty or a discharge from the place of his confinement, this pardon must be pleaded, and his claim be rendered visible; and afterwards he is no longer deemed a guilty person, but discharged, in open court, from the sentence which he was under. Thus, Christ procures forgiveness by his blood; the gospel holds it forth, and describes those who have a right to claim it as believers; faith pleads it, and claims it as belonging to him in particular; and hence arises a visible discharge from condemnation, and a right to claim the benefits which attend it. If we understand justification by faith in this sense, we do not attribute too much to faith, on the one hand, nor too little to Christ's righteousness on the other. [See Note I, page 121.]

i Psal. vii. 8.

k 2 Sam. xxii. 21, et seq.

l Ezek. xvi. 14.

We choose to call faith an instrument rather than a condition of our justification, as we are sensible that the word 'condition' is generally used to signify that for the sake of which a benefit is conferred, rather than the instrument by which it is applied. Not but that the word may be explained in such a way as is consistent with the doctrine of justification by faith. We do not deny that faith is the condition of our claim to Christ's righteousness; or that it is God's ordinance, without which we have no ground to conclude our interest in it. We must distinguish between its being a condition of forgiveness, and its being a condition of our visible and apparent right to forgiveness. This privilege cannot be said to belong to us, unless we receive it; nor can we conclude that we have an interest in Christ's redemption, any more than they for whom he did not lay down his life, but by this medium. We must first consider Christ's righteousness as wrought out for all those who were given him by the Father; and then consider faith as that which gives us ground to conclude that the privilege belongs in particular to us. This account of the use of faith in justification, we cannot but think sufficient to obviate the most material objections which are brought against our way of maintaining the doctrine of justification, namely, by Christ's righteousness, in one respect, and by faith in another. It is an injurious suggestion to suppose that we deny the necessity of faith in any sense, or to conclude that we may lay claim to justification without it; for we strenuously assert, on the one hand, the necessity of Christ's righteousness being wrought out for us, and of forgiveness being thereby procured,—and, on the other hand, the necessity of our receiving it. Each of these points is true in its respective place. Christ must have the glory which is due to him; and faith the work or office which belongs to it.

We have thus considered Christ's righteousness as applied by faith. It may be observed, also, that there is one scripture in which it is said to be 'imputed by faith.' The apostle Paul, when speaking concerning Abraham's justification by faith in this righteousness, says, 'It was imputed to him for righteousness;' and adds, that 'it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe.'^m In this scripture, I conceive, imputation is taken for application. Accordingly, the meaning is, the righteousness of Christ is so imputed that we have ground to place it to our own account, if we believe. This is the same as applying it by faith. It must be allowed, indeed, that while the apostle speaks elsewhere of 'faith being counted for righteousness';ⁿ there is a great deal of difficulty in the mode of expression. If we assert that the act of believing is imputed for righteousness, as they do who establish the doctrine of justification by works, or by faith as a work, we overthrow what we have been maintaining. If, on the other hand, we understand faith for the object of faith, namely, what was wrought out by Christ, which faith is conversant about, and conclude, as I conceive we ought to do, that this is imputed for righteousness, we are supposed by some to deviate too much from the common sense of words. But if there be such a figurative way of speaking used in other scriptures, why may we not suppose that it is used in the text under consideration? If other graces are sometimes taken for the object of them, why may not faith be taken, by a metonymy, for its object? Thus the apostle calls those to whom he writes, 'his joy,' that is, the object or matter of his joy.^o In the book of Canticles, the church calls Christ 'her love,'^p that is, the object of her love. Hope also is plainly taken for the object of it, when the apostle says, 'Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?'^q He here plainly intends that whatever is the object of hope, cannot be in our present possession. Christ, moreover, is styled, 'the blessed hope,'^r that is, the person whose appearance we hope for. Jacob, too, speaks of God as 'the fear of his father Isaac,'^s that is, the person whom he worshipped with reverential fear. Now, in all these cases the phraseology is equally difficult with that of the text under consideration.

m Rom. iv. 22, 23, 24.
q Rom. viii. 24.

n Ver. 5.
r Tit. ii. 13.

o Phil. iv. 1.
s Gen. xxxi. 53.

p Cant. viii. 4.

Inferences from the Doctrine of Justification.

We have thus spoken concerning Christ's righteousness as wrought out for us, and applied by faith. This doctrine is the foundation of all our peace and comfort, both in life and in death; and cannot but be reckoned a doctrine of the highest importance. We shall now consider some things which may be inferred from it.

1. From what has been said concerning justification, as founded in Christ's suretyship-righteousness, wrought out for us by what was done and suffered by him in his human nature, and having infinite value as depending on the glory of the divine nature to which the human is united, we cannot but infer the absurdity of two contrary opinions, namely, that of those who have asserted that we are justified by the essential righteousness of Christ as God,^t and that of others who pretend that, because all mediatorial acts are performed by Christ only as man, the infinite dignity of the divine nature has no reference to their being satisfactory to divine justice. This is what they mean when they say that we are justified by Christ's righteousness as man, in opposition to our being justified by his essential righteousness as God.^u I think, however, that the truth lies in a medium between these extremes. On the one hand, we must suppose that Christ's engagement to become a surety for us, to stand in our room and stead, and to pay the debt which we had contracted to the justice of God, could not be done in any other than the human nature; for the divine nature is not capable of being under a law, of fulfilling it, or, in any instance, of obeying or suffering; so that we cannot be justified by Christ's essential righteousness, as God. On the other hand, what Christ did and suffered as man, would not have been sufficient for our justification, had it not had an infinite value put upon it, arising from the union of the nature which suffered with the divine nature, agreeably to the apostle's expression, 'The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.'^x

2. From what has been said concerning the fruits and effects of justification, that our sins are pardoned and we made accepted in the Beloved, we infer that it is not only an unscriptural way of speaking, but has a tendency to overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining, to assert, as some do, that God is only rendered reconcilable by what was done and suffered by Christ. This seems to be maintained by different parties with different views. Some speak of God's being rendered reconcilable by Christ's righteousness, that they may make way for what they have farther to advance, namely, that God's being reconciled to a sinner is the result of his own repentance, or the amendment of his life, whereby he makes his peace with him. This is to make repentance or reformation the matter of our justification, and to substitute it for Christ's righteousness. They, therefore, who speak of God's being made reconcilable in this sense by his blood, are so far from giving a true account of the doctrine of justification, that, in reality, they overthrow it.—But there are others who speak of God's being reconcilable as the consequence of Christ's satisfaction, that they may not be thought to assert that God is actually reconciled by the blood of Christ, to those who are in an unconverted state,—a state which is inconsistent with a state of reconciliation. They hence use this mode of expression, lest they should be thought to give countenance to the doctrine of actual justification before faith. But certainly we are under no necessity of advancing one absurdity to avoid another. Let it be here considered, therefore, that the scripture speaks expressly of God's being reconciled by the death of Christ. He is said, as a God of peace,^y to have 'brought him again from the dead.' Elsewhere the apostle speaks not of God becoming reconcilable to us, but of his 'having reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.'^z Again, he says, 'If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall

^t This opinion was propagated soon after the Reformation, by Andr. Osiander, who lived a little before the middle of the sixteenth century.

^u This opinion was propagated soon after by Stancarus, in opposition to Osiander, whom Du Pin reckons amongst the Socinians, or who, at least, after he had advanced this notion, denied the doctrine of the Trinity. [See Du Pin's *Eccles. Hist.* sixteenth century. Book iv. chap. 6.]

^x Acts xx. 28.

^y Heb. xiii. 20.

^z 2 Cor. v. 18.

be saved,'^a that is, shall obtain the saving effects of this reconciliation, 'by his life.' Again, 'Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight.'^b Here he describes those who were reconciled as once enemies; and speaks of their reconciliation as having been procured by the death of Christ, and of holiness here and salvation hereafter as the consequence. What he speaks of, therefore, is such a reconciliation as is contained in our justification.—But though this appears very agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost in scripture, it must be understood in consistency with those scriptures which represent persons in an unconverted state as 'children of wrath,'^c and as being 'hateful,'^d that is, not only deserving to be hated by God, but actually hated, as appears by the many threatenings which are denounced against them, and by their being in a condemned state. We must understand the doctrine of reconciliation consistently with what the scriptures say respecting such persons, that we may not give countenance to the doctrine of some who, not distinguishing between God's secret and revealed will, maintain that we are not only virtually but actually justified before we believe; as though we had a right to claim Christ's righteousness before we have any ground to conclude that it was wrought out for us. But what has been already suggested concerning justification by faith, will, I think, sufficiently remove this difficulty.—The only thing which remains to be explained is, how God may be said to be reconciled by the blood of Christ, to a person who is in an unconverted state, and as such, is represented as a child of wrath. Now so long as a person is an unbeliever, he has no ground to conclude, according to the tenor of God's revealed will, that he is reconciled to him, or that he is any other than a child of wrath. Yet, when we speak of God's being reconciled to his elect, according to the tenor of his secret will, before they believe, we in effect say that justification, as it is an immanent act in God, is antecedent to faith,—which is a certain truth, inasmuch as faith is a fruit and consequence; and we add, that God does not declare that he is reconciled to us, or give us ground to conclude that he is, so as to make it appear that we are no longer the children of wrath, till we believe. If this be duly considered, we have no reason to assert that God is reconcilable rather than reconciled by the death of Christ, lest we should be thought to maintain the doctrine of justification, or deliverance from wrath, as a declared act, before we believe. We may add that God was reconcilable to his elect, that is, willing to be reconciled to them, before Christ died for them; otherwise he would never have sent him into the world to make reconciliation for the sins of his people. He was reconcilable, and therefore designed to turn from the fierceness of his wrath; and, in order to this, he appointed Christ to make satisfaction for sin, and procure peace for them.

3. There is not the least inconsistency between those scriptures which speak of justification as an act of God's free grace, and others which speak of it as by faith founded on Christ's righteousness; or between God's pardoning sin freely, without regard to any thing done by us to procure it, and his insisting on and receiving a full satisfaction, as the meritorious and procuring cause of it. It is sometimes objected against what we have advanced in explaining the doctrine we maintain, that it represents justification, as, in some respects, an act of justice, and in others an act of grace; as though the doctrine were inconsistent with itself, and our method of explaining it were liable to an absurdity; or as though two contradictory propositions could be both true, namely, that justification is an act of the strictest justice, without any abatement of the debt demanded, and yet an act of free grace, without insisting on the payment of the debt. But this seeming contradiction may be easily reconciled. For the debt was not paid by us in our own persons. Had this been done, it would have been inconsistent with forgiveness being an act of grace. But the debt was paid by our surety; and as paid by him, there was no abatement of it. He did not receive a discharge by an act of grace, but was justified as our head or surety, by his own righteousness, or works performed by

a Rom. v. 10.

b Col. i. 20, 21, 22.

c Eph. ii. 3.

d Tit. iii. 3.

him ; while we are justified by his suretiship-righteousness, without works performed by us. Moreover, as was formerly observed, this surety was provided for us. Hence when we speak of justification as an act of grace, we distinguish between the justification of our surety, after he had given full satisfaction for the debt which we had contracted ; and the payment being placed to our account by God's gracious imputation of it to us, and our consequently obtaining forgiveness, which can be no other than an act of the highest grace.

4. From what has been said concerning justification by faith, we infer the method, order, and time in which God justifies his people. There are some who speak of justification, not only before faith, but from eternity ; and consider it as an immanent act in God in the same sense as election is said to be. I will not deny eternal justification, provided it be considered as contained in God's secret will, and not made the rule by which we are to determine ourselves to be in a justified state, and as such to have a right and title to eternal life, before it is revealed or apprehended by faith. If we understand it in this sense, it is beyond dispute that justification is not by faith. But as the most known, yea, the only sense in which justification is spoken of, as applied to particular persons, is, that it is by faith, we must suppose that it is a declared act. That which is hid in God, and not declared, cannot be said to be applied ; and that which is not applied cannot be the rule by which particular persons may judge of their state. Thus, to speak of eternal election, and say that God has peremptorily determined the state of those who shall be saved so that they shall not perish, is nothing to particular persons, unless they have ground to conclude themselves elected. So if we say that God has, from all eternity, given his elect into Christ's hands ; that he undertook before the foundation of the world to redeem them ; and that, in consequence, God promised that he would give eternal life unto them ; or, if we consider Christ as having fulfilled what he undertook from all eternity, finished transgression, brought in everlasting righteousness, and fully paid the debt which he undertook ; consider him as being discharged, and receiving an acquittance, when raised from the dead ; and all this as done in the name of the elect, as their head and representative ; and if we farther consider them, in terms of an expression often used, as virtually justified in him ; all this is nothing to them, with respect to their peace and comfort ; they have no more a right to claim an interest in the privilege or relation of being justified persons than if he had not paid a price for them. We suppose, therefore, that justification, as it is the foundation of our claim to eternal life, is a declared act. Now, if justification be a declared act, there must be some method which God uses, whereby he declares it or makes it known. Yet it is certain that he nowhere in scripture tells an unbeliever that he has an interest in Christ's righteousness, or that his sins are pardoned, or gives him any warrant to take comfort from any such conclusion. On the contrary, such an one has no ground to conclude otherwise concerning himself than that he is a child of wrath ; for he is to judge of things according to the tenor of God's revealed will. Christ's righteousness is nothing to him in point of application. He is guilty of bold presumption if he lays claim to it, or takes comfort from it ; as much so as he would be were he to say, ' Some are elected, therefore I am.' When a person believes, however, he has a right to conclude that he is justified, or to claim all the privileges which result from justification. This is what we call justification by faith ; which, therefore, cannot be before faith. That which gives a person a right to claim a privilege, must be antecedent to this claim ; or, that which is the foundation of a person's concluding himself to be justified, must be antecedent to his making this conclusion. Hence, all who duly consider what they affirm, must conclude that justification is not before faith.

5. From what has been said concerning the office or use of faith in justification, as an instrument which applies Christ's righteousness to ourselves, we infer that it is more than an evidence of our justification. We do not indeed deny it to be an evidence that we were virtually justified in Christ as our head and representative, when he was raised from the dead ; in the same sense as it is an evidence of our eternal election. But this is equally applicable to all other graces ; and therefore cannot be a true description of justifying faith. If we are justified by faith, only as it is an evidence of our right to Christ's righteousness, we are as much justified

by love, patience, and submission to the divine will, or any other grace which accompanies salvation. But they who speak of faith as only an evidence, will not say that we are justified by all other graces, in the same sense as we are justified by faith. Indeed the scripture gives us no warrant so to do.

6. From what has been said concerning faith, as giving us a right to claim Christ's righteousness, we infer that a person is justified before he has what we call the faith of assurance; of which more shall be said hereafter. We hence consider the grace of faith as justifying us, or giving us a right to claim Christ's righteousness, whether we have an actual claim or not. If this were not allowed, the loss of assurance would infer the suspension or loss of our justification; and consequently would render our state as uncertain as our frames, and our peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, as liable to be lost as that peace and joy which we sometimes have in believing, and at other times are destitute of.

7. From what has been said concerning justifying faith being accompanied with all other graces, we infer that that faith which is justifying, is also a saving grace, or a grace which accompanies salvation. Yet there is this difference between saving faith, as we generally call it, and justifying faith,—the former respects Christ in all his offices, the latter considers him only in his priestly office, or as set forth to be a propitiation for sin.

The Nature, Kinds, Objects, Degrees, and Uses of Faith.

We are now led to consider the grace of faith in its larger extent, with respect to both its acts and its objects, as stated in the former of the Answers we are explaining. We shall here examine the nature of faith in general, or of that faith which, as already explained, we call justifying. There are some things in this grace which are common to it with other graces. In particular, it is styled a saving grace, not as being the cause of our salvation, but as it accompanies it, or is connected with it. Again, it is said to be wrought in the heart of a sinner, to distinguish it from other habits of a lower nature, which are acquired by us. It is also said to be wrought by the Spirit and word of God,—by his Spirit, as the principal efficient, who, in order to work it in us, exerts his divine power,—and by the word, as the instrument which he makes use of. The word presents to us the object of faith; and it is God's ordinance in our attending to which he works and excites it. Moreover, there are several things supposed or contained in this grace of faith, which are common to it with other graces. When we speak of a believer, or one who has faith, being convinced of sin and misery, of his being unable to recover himself out of the lost condition in which he is by nature, and of the impossibility of his being recovered out of it by any other creature, we view faith as containing several things in common with other graces, particularly with conversion, effectual calling, and repentance unto life. These things, therefore, we shall pass over as having been considered elsewhere, and confine ourselves to what is peculiar to this grace mentioned in this Answer. Yet a few things may be observed concerning it, as it is styled a saving grace, and wrought in the heart of man by the Spirit and word of God. We shall add also some other things of which we have no particular account in this Answer, and which may contain a full explanation of this grace. In discussing the subject, we shall observe the following method. First, we shall consider the meaning of the word 'faith,' in the more general idea of it. Secondly, we shall speak particularly concerning the various kinds of faith. Thirdly, we shall speak concerning the various objects and acts of saving faith; especially as it assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, and receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness held forth therein. Fourthly, we shall consider it as a grace which accompanies salvation, and is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit, and instrumentality of the word. Fifthly, we shall consider it as strong or weak, increasing or declining; and also the various marks and evidences of its being in these respective states. Sixthly, we shall speak of the use of faith in the whole conduct of our lives; as every thing we do in an acceptable manner is said to be done by it. Lastly, we shall show how it is to be attained or increased, and what are the means conducive to these ends.

The General Nature of Faith.

As to the meaning of the word 'faith,' in its more general idea, it is either an assent to a truth, founded on sufficient evidence, or a confiding or relying on the word or power of one who is able and willing to afford us sufficient help or relief.^e

1. As an assent to a truth proposed and supported by sufficient evidence, it is more especially an act of the understanding. In order to its existing, it is necessary that, as the matter of our belief, something be discovered to us which demands or calls for our assent; and this is considered either as only true, or as both true and good. If it be considered as only true, the faith or assent which is required is speculative; but if we consider it not only as true but as good, or as containing something redounding to our advantage, the faith resulting from it is practical, and is seated partly in the understanding and partly in the will, or, at least, the will is influenced and inclined to embrace what the understanding not only assents to as true, but proposes to us as what, if enjoyed, would tend very much to our advantage.—As to this general description of faith, as an assent to what is reported, founded upon sufficient evidence, we may farther consider^f that it is not in our power to believe a thing, unless the judgment be convinced, and we have ground to conclude it to be true. Accordingly, there must be something which has a tendency to give conviction; and this is what we call evidence. Every thing which is reported is not to be credited; for it has very often no appearance of truth in it. Besides, it is reasonable for the understanding to demand a proof before it yields an assent. If the matter be one of report, we are to consider the nature of the evidence, whether it be sufficient or insufficient to persuade us to believe what is reported; and according to the strength or credibility of the evidence, we believe it, hesitate about it, or utterly reject it. If, according to our present view of things, it may be true or false, we hardly call it the object of faith; we can only say concerning it, that it is probable. If, on the other hand, it be attested by such evidence as cannot without scepticism be denied, there arises what we call certainty, or an assurance of faith supported by the strongest evidence.—Moreover, according to the nature of the evidence or testimony on which faith is founded, it is distinguished into human and divine. Both of these are referred to in the apostle's words, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.'^g As to human testimony, though it may not be termed false, yet it can hardly be deemed any other than fallible; for it cannot be said concerning sinful man, that it is impossible for him to lie or deceive, or to be deceived himself. But when we believe a thing on the divine testimony, our faith is infallible. It is as impossible for us to be deceived, as it is for God to impart that to us which is contrary to his infinite holiness and veracity. It is in the latter sense that we consider the word 'faith,' when we speak of it as an act of religious worship, or as included or supposed in our idea of saving faith. Accordingly, we style it a firm assent to every thing which God has revealed as founded on the divine veracity.

Let us now consider faith as an assent to a thing, not only as true, but as good. On this account, we call it a practical assent. It is first seated in the understanding; and then the will embraces what the understanding discovers to be conducive to our happiness. We first believe the truth presented to us, and then regulate our conduct agreeably to it. When a criminal hears a report of an act of grace being issued forth by the king, he does not rest in a mere assent to its truth, but

^e This is commonly called 'fiducia,' and as such is distinguished from 'fides,' by which the former is generally expressed.

^f In this respect faith is distinguished from science. Accordingly, we are said to know a thing which is contained in an axiom, which no one, who has the exercise of his understanding, can doubt of; for example, that the whole is greater than the part, or that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time, &c. Every thing which is founded on a mathematical demonstration, is included in this word science; to which we may add ocular demonstration. Now these things are not properly the object of faith; or the assent we give to the truth of them is not founded merely upon evidence. In this respect, faith is distinguished from it: for which reason we call it an assent to a truth founded on evidence.

^g 1 John v. 9.

puts in his claim to it. Or when a merchant is credibly informed that there are great advantages to be obtained by trading into foreign countries, he receives the report with a design to use all proper methods to partake of the advantage. 'The kingdom of heaven,' says our Saviour, 'is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.'^h We have sufficient evidence to support our faith, that there is forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ, and that all spiritual blessings are treasured up in him for the heirs of salvation. In this respect faith does not contain a mere speculative assent to the truth of these propositions; but it excites in us an endeavour to obtain the blessings in the way which is prescribed by him who is the giver of them.

2. Faith may be farther considered as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object. This is very distinct from the former sense of the word. For though it supposes, indeed, an assent of the understanding to some truth proposed; yet this truth is of such a nature that it produces in us a resting or reliance on one who is able and has expressed a willingness to do us good, and whose promise is such as we have ground to depend on. This supposes in him who is the subject of faith, a sense of his own weakness or indigence; and in him who is the object of it, a fitness to be the object of trust for giving relief. Thus, the sick man depends upon the skill and faithfulness of the physician, and determines to look no farther for help, but relies on his prescriptions, and uses the means which he appoints for the restoring of his health. Or when a person is assaulted by one who threatens to ruin him, and is able to do it as being an overmatch for him, he has recourse to and depends on the assistance of one who is able to secure and defend him, and thereby prevent the danger which he feared. Thus Jehoshaphat, when his country was invaded by a great multitude of foreign troops, being apprehensive that he was not able to withstand them, exercised the faith of reliance on the divine power, when he said, 'We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.'ⁱ God is very often in scripture represented as the object of trust. The church says, 'I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength.'^k Elsewhere, 'he that walketh in darkness and hath no light,' that is, knows not which way to turn, and is helpless and destitute of all comfort, is encouraged to 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'^l This is truly and properly a divine faith; and, accordingly, an act of religious worship. It is opposed to a 'trusting in man, and making flesh his arm;'^m and it supposes a firm persuasion that God is able to do all for us which we stand in need of, that he has promised to do us good, and that he will never fail nor forsake those who repose their trust or confidence in him. With this view the believer relies on his perfections, seeks to him for comfort, and lays the whole stress of his hope of salvation on him, not doubting concerning the event, but concluding himself safe if he can say that 'the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'ⁿ [See Note K, page 124.]

The Various Kinds of Faith.

We are now led to consider the various kinds of faith mentioned in scripture. We read of a faith which was adapted to that extraordinary dispensation of providence in which God was pleased to confirm some great and important truths by miracles. This faith is styled a faith in miracles. There is also a faith which has no reference to a supernatural event, and is not confined to any particular age or state of the church in which miracles are expected, but is founded on the gospel-revelation; which, how much soever it may resemble saving faith, yet falls short of it. There is likewise a faith which is inseparably connected with salvation.

1. We shall speak first concerning the faith of miracles. This is what our Saviour intends, when he tells his disciples that, 'if they had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, they should say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and

^h Matt. xiii. 45, 46.
^m Jer. xvii. 5.

ⁱ 2 Chron. xx. 12.
ⁿ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

^k Isa. xii. 2.

^l Chap. 1. 10.

it should remove; and nothing should be impossible unto them.^o It is a faith which many had who were not in a state of salvation; as is plain from what our Saviour says, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'^p The apostle Paul supposes that a person might have 'all faith,' that is, this kind of faith, 'so that he could remove mountains,'^q which is a proverbial expression, denoting that extraordinary and miraculous events might attend it; and yet, at the same time, be destitute of 'charity' or love to God, and consequently without saving grace, and so appear in the end to 'be nothing.' Some have questioned whether this faith of miracles was peculiar to the gospel dispensation in the time of our Saviour and the apostles, and so was not required in those who wrought miracles under the Old Testament dispensation. Others suppose that, from the nature of the thing, it was always necessary that faith should be exercised when a miracle was wrought. We have little or no account, however, of this faith as exercised by those who wrought miracles before our Saviour's time; and, therefore, we cannot peremptorily determine this matter.

According to the account we have in the New Testament, there were several things necessary to or included in this faith of miracles. First, some important article of revealed religion required to be proposed for confirmation; and, in order to this, an explicit appeal was made to God, in expectation of his immediate interposition in working a miracle for that end. Everything which was the object of faith, was not, indeed, to be proved true by a miracle; but only those things which could not be sufficiently evinced without it, so as to beget a divine faith in those who were the subjects of conviction. We never read that miracles were wrought to convince the world that there was a God or a providence, or to persuade men concerning the truth of those things which might be sufficiently proved by rational arguments. But when there could not be proof given without the finger of God being rendered visible by a miracle wrought, then those who had the faith of miracles depended on such an instance of divine condescension, and the people who were to receive conviction were to expect such an extraordinary event.—Again, it was necessary that there should, in him who wrought the miracles, be a firm persuasion of the truth of the doctrine to be confirmed by it, together with an explicit appeal to it for the conviction of those whose faith was to be confirmed. Sometimes we read that, when miracles were to be wrought in favour of those who before had a sufficient proof that our Saviour was the Messiah, it was necessary that they should have a strong persuasion of this truth, and that he was able to work a miracle; otherwise they had no ground to expect that a miracle should be wrought. In the former case, we read of Christ's disciples working miracles for the conviction of the Jews, and exercising, at the same time, the faith of miracles; and in the latter, a general faith was demanded that our Saviour was the Messiah, before the miracle was wrought. In this sense we are to understand our Lord's reply to the man who desired that he would cast the devil out of his son, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth';^r which is as if he had said, 'Thou hast had sufficient conviction by other miracles that I am the Messiah, and consequently hast no reason to doubt that I can cast the devil out of thy son; therefore, if thou hast a strong persuasion of this truth, the thing that thou desirest shall be granted.' Elsewhere also it is said, 'He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.'^s—Further, how much soever a person might exercise this strong persuasion that a miracle should be wrought, which we generally call a faith of miracles, I cannot think that this event always ensued without exception. For sometimes God might refuse to work a miracle, that he might cast contempt on some vile persons who pretended to the faith of miracles; who, though they professed their faith in Christ as the Messiah, yet contradicted their profession by their conduct. Hence, God would not put the honour upon them to work a miracle at their desire. Much less are we to suppose that he would work a miracle at the pleasure of any, if they were persuaded that

^o Matt. xvii. 20.
^s Matt. xiii. 58.

^p Chap. vii. 22, 23.

^q 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

^r Mark ix. 23.

he would do so. Again, sometimes God might, in judgment, refuse to exert his divine power in working a miracle, when persons had had sufficient means for their conviction by other miracles, but believed not. Finally, when the truth of the Christian religion had been sufficiently confirmed by miracles, they were less common; and then we read nothing more of that faith which took its denomination from them.

2. There is another kind of faith, which has some things in common with saving faith, and is sometimes mistaken for it, but is vastly different from it. This, in some, is called an historical faith; and in others, by reason of the short continuance of it, a temporary faith. An historical faith is that whereby persons are convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel, though it has very little influence on their conduct. Such have right notions of divine things, but do not entertain a suitable regard to them. Religion with them is little more than a matter of speculation. They do not doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel, but are able and ready to defend them by proper arguments; yet, though in words they profess their faith in Christ, in works they deny him. Such as these the apostle intends when he says, ‘Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble.’^t He charges them with a vain presumption, in expecting to be justified by their faith; it being without works, or those fruits which were necessary to justify it, or evince its sincerity, or to prove that it was such a grace as accompanies salvation; and therefore he gives it no better a character than that of a dead faith.

As for that which is called a temporary faith, it differs little from the former; unless we consider it as having a tendency, in some measure, to excite the affections, and so far to regulate the conduct as to produce in those who have it a form of godliness; and it continues as long as this form comports with or is subservient to their secular interest. But it is not such a faith as will enable them to pass through fiery trials, or to part with all things for Christ’s sake, or to rejoice in him as their portion, when they meet with little but tribulation and persecution in the world for the sake of the gospel. Trials and persecutions will evidently discover its insincerity; for it will wither like a plant which is without a root. Our Saviour speaks of it in the parable, of the ‘seed that fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.’ This he explains of him ‘who heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.’^u This parable had a particular relation to the Jews, who heard John the Baptist gladly, rejoicing in his light for a season, and seemed to be convinced by his doctrine concerning the Messiah who was shortly to appear; but who, when they apprehended that his kingdom, instead of advancing them to great honours in the world, was likely to expose them to tribulations and persecution, were offended in him. It is applicable also to all those who think themselves something, and are thought so by others, as to the profession they make of Christ and his gospel; but who afterwards appear to be nothing, deceiving their own souls.

3. We are next to consider faith as a grace inseparably connected with salvation. This is called ‘justifying faith,’ and also ‘a saving grace,’ in this Answer in which the nature of it is explained. What may be farther said concerning it will be considered under the following Heads, which we propose to insist on in the general method before laid down. [See Note L, p. 126.]

The Objects and Acts of Saving Faith.

We proceed, therefore, to speak concerning the various objects and acts of saving faith.

1. Concerning its objects. Every thing which is the object of it must take its rise from God. We are now speaking concerning a divine faith; and inasmuch

^t James ii. 19.

^u Matt. xiii. 5, 6, compared with ver. 20, 21.

as saving faith supposes and includes an assent to the truth of divine revelation, we are bound to believe whatever God has revealed in his word ; so that as all scripture is the rule of faith, the matter which it contains is the object of faith. As scripture contains an historical relation of things, these are the objects of faith, and we are to yield an assent to what God reveals, as being of infallible verity. As it is a rule of duty and obedience, we are bound to believe so as to adore the sovereignty of God, commanding us to submit to his authority, and having a right to give laws to our consciences ; and we are bound also to acknowledge ourselves his subjects and servants, under an indispensable obligation to yield the obedience of faith to him. As scripture contains many great and precious promises, these are the objects of faith ; as we are to desire and hope for the accomplishment of them, and to depend on the faithfulness of God for bringing it about,—particularly, we are to consider the promises as they are all yea and amen in Christ to the glory of God. As for the threatenings which relate to the wrath of God due to sin, and warnings to guard the soul against it, and induce us to abhor and hate it ; these are objects of faith, so far as that we must believe and tremble, and see the need we stand in of grace, which we receive by faith, to enable us to improve them, that, through the virtue of Christ's righteousness, we may hope to escape his wrath, and by his strength be fortified against the prevalence of corruption which has proved destructive to multitudes. But the principal object of faith is God in Christ, our great Mediator. Thus our Saviour says, ' Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'^x This is sometimes styled coming to the Father by him, as it is elsewhere said, ' No man cometh unto the Father but by me ;' or it is styled coming to him as Mediator immediately, that in him we may obtain whatever he has purchased for us, and thereby may have access to God as our reconciled God and Father, and in so doing, obtain eternal life. Accordingly, he says, ' He that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'^y

2. We are now led to consider the particular acts of saving faith in which we have to do with Christ as Mediator, whereby we have access to God through him. There are several expressions in scripture, by which these acts of saving faith are set forth. Some of these are metaphorical. In particular, faith is called a looking to him. Thus he is represented by the prophet as saying, ' Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.'^z Sometimes it is called coming to him, pursuant to the invitation he gives, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'^a This coming is elsewhere explained, as in the scripture formerly mentioned, by ' believing in him.'^b Moreover, as we hope for refreshment and comfort in believing, faith is set forth by the metaphorical expression of ' coming to the waters, and buying wine and milk without money, and without price,'^c that is, receiving from him those blessings which tend to satisfy and exhilarate the soul, and which are given to such as have nothing to offer for them. Sometimes also faith is represented by fleeing to him ; or, as the apostle expresses it, ' fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,'^d—alluding to the eminent type of faith contained in the manslayer's fleeing to the city of refuge from the avenger of blood, and therein finding protection and safety. This is a description more especially of faith as justifying. In this respect it is elsewhere described, as a ' putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,'^e or the glorious robe of his righteousness ; on which account we are said to be ' clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness.'^f Again, when we are enabled to apprehend our interest in him by faith, together with the blessings which are the result, we are said to rejoice in Christ Jesus. There are many other expressions by which this grace is set forth in scripture. But those acts of it which we shall more especially consider, are our receiving Christ, giving up ourselves to him, and trusting in or relying on him.

Faith is that grace whereby we receive Christ. It is said, ' As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.'^g This contains the application of an overture made by him, not merely

x John xiv. 1.
c Isa. lv. 1.

y Chap. vi. 35.
d Heb. vi. 18.

z Isa. xlv. 22.
e Rom. xiii. 14.

a Matt. xi. 28.
f Isa. lxi. 10.

b John vi. 35.
g John i. 12.

of something he has to bestow which might contribute to our happiness, but of himself. Christ has many things to bestow upon his people, but he first gives himself; that is, he expresses a willingness to be their Prince and Saviour, their Prophet, Priest, and King, that, being thus related and adhering to him, they may be made partakers of his benefits. Accordingly, the soul by faith applies itself to him, and embraces the overture. Hereupon he is said to be ours; and, as the consequence, we lay claim to those benefits which he has purchased for us as our Redeemer. Christ is considered as the first promised blessing in the covenant of grace; and 'with him' God 'freely gives' his people 'all things' they stand in need of which respect their everlasting salvation.^h This supposes the person receiving him to be indigent and destitute of every thing which may tend to make him happy, brought into the greatest straits and difficulties, and standing in need of one who is able to afford relief to him. He has heard in the gospel that Christ is able to supply his wants, and that he is willing to come and take up his abode with him. Accordingly, the heart is open to embrace him, esteeming him altogether lovely and desirable,—and beholding that excellency and glory in his person which renders him the object of his delight, as he is said to be precious to them that believe.ⁱ Looking upon him as God-man Mediator, he concludes that he is 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him,' and that all the treasures of grace and glory are purchased by him, and given into his hand to apply to those who have an interest in him. He expects to find them all in Christ, as the result of his being made partaker of him. Accordingly, he adheres to him by this which is called an appropriating act of faith; whereby he who was before represented in the gospel as the Saviour and Redeemer of his people, the fountain of all they enjoy or hope for, and by whom they have access to God as their reconciled God and Father, is applied by the soul to itself, as the spring of all its present and future comfort and happiness.

Another act of faith is giving up ourselves to Christ. As, in the covenant of grace, God says, 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people,' so faith builds on this foundation. It first apprehends that he is able and willing to do his people good, and make them happy in the enjoyment of himself; and with this encouragement the soul, as has just been observed, receives him, and in consequence devotes itself to him, as desiring to be amongst the number of his faithful servants and followers. God sanctifies or separates his people to himself as the objects of his discriminating grace and love; and they desire, as the consequence of this, to give up themselves to him. Two things are supposed in this act of self-dedication. It supposes, first, a firm persuasion and acknowledgment of his right to us. It not only supposes him to have this right as the possessor of all things, or as God,—for as the potter has a right to his clay, so has the Creator to the work of his hands; but it supposes that he has a right to us by purchase as Mediator,—in which character, faith, particularly saving faith, of which we are now speaking, has more especially an eye to him. 'Ye are not your own,' says the apostle, 'for ye are bought with a price.'^k Hence, this act of faith is an ascribing to him of that glory to which he lays claim by right of redemption. And as God has constituted him heir of all things, more especially of those who are called his peculiar treasure; so the believer gives up himself to him. Before this, the matter in dispute was, Who is Lord over us? whether ought we to be at our own disposal or at his? whether it be expedient to serve divers lusts and pleasures, or to be subject to him as our supreme Lord and Lawgiver? But the soul is thoroughly convinced, by the internal efficacious work of the Spirit, that our great Mediator is made of God both Lord and Christ, that no one has a right to stand in competition with him, and that we owe not only what we can do but even ourselves unto him; and as the result of this conviction, it devotes itself to him by faith.—Again, our giving ourselves up by faith to Christ, supposes that we are sensible of the many blessings which he has in store for his people. We hence give up ourselves to him in hope of his doing all that for us, and working all that grace in us, which is necessary to our salvation. More, however, shall be said on this subject, when we con-

^h Rom. viii. 32.ⁱ 1 Pet. ii. 7.^k 1 Cor. vi. 20.

sider him as the object of trust. All that I shall add at present is, that, having this view of the person of Christ, as one who demands obedience, love, and gratitude from us, we give up ourselves entirely and without reserve to him. Thus the apostle says, 'They first gave their own selves to the Lord;'^l and he exhorts the church to 'yield themselves unto God, as those that were alive from the dead,'^m and to 'present their bodies,' that is, themselves, and not merely the lower or meaner part of themselves, 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service.'ⁿ As the result of thus giving up ourselves to Christ, we say by faith, 'Lord, truly I am thy servant, and desire to be so for ever. Work in me what thou requirest, and then command what thou pleasest. I am entirely at thy disposal; do with me as seemeth good in thy sight; only let all the dispensations of thy providence be displays of thy love, and be made subservient to my salvation.' This is represented as our solemn act and deed; whereby, with the most mature deliberation, we make a surrender of ourselves to him. The prophet speaks of it as if it were done by an instrument or deed of conveyance; and our consent to be his, is represented as a giving up our names to him: 'One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.'^o This is done with the highest veneration, as an act of religious worship, and with the greatest humility, as being sensible that we give him nothing more than his own, that he is not profited hereby, and that the advantage redounds entirely to us. We do it with judgment. As faith always supposes a conviction of the judgment, it considers those relations which Christ stands in to his people, and endeavours to behave itself in conformity to them. We are desirous hereby to give up ourselves to him as a prophet, to be led and guided by him in the way of salvation; as a priest, to give us a right to eternal life as the purchase of his blood; as an advocate, to plead our cause; and as a king, to give laws to us, and defend us from the insults of our spiritual enemies, and advance us to those honours which he has laid up for his faithful subjects. We give up ourselves to him to worship him in all his ordinances, in hope of his presence and blessing to attend them, in order to our spiritual and eternal advantage; and we do all this without the least reserve, and without desire to have any will separate from or contrary to his.

Another act of faith consists in a fixed, unshaken trust and reliance upon him. This, as was formerly observed, is a very common and known acceptance of the word 'faith.' As we depend on his promise as a God that cannot lie, and give up ourselves to him as one who has a right to us; so we trust him as one in whom we can safely confide, and on whom we can lay the whole stress of our salvation. This act of faith is more frequently insisted on in scripture than any other, it being a main ingredient in all other graces which accompany salvation, and there being nothing by which God is more glorified. It is not one single perfection of the divine nature which is the object of it; but every thing which he has made known concerning himself, as conducive to our blessedness. We trust him with all we have, and for all we want or hope for. This implies a sense of our own insufficiency and nothingness, and a sense of his all-sufficient fulness. The former of these is what is sometimes styled a soul-emptying act of faith. It is that whereby we see ourselves to be nothing, not only as we cannot be profitable to God, or lay him under any obligations to us, as those who pretend to merit any good at his hand, but as unable to perform any good action without his assistance. In this respect it says, 'Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'^p Nothing tends more than this to humble and abase the soul before him. Hereby also we are led to another act, which more immediately contains the formal nature of faith; in which it depends on the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God, to supply our wants and bestow the blessings which he has promised. God the Father is the object of this trust or dependence, as the divine all-sufficiency is glorified, grace imparted, and the promises fulfilled by him, through a Mediator; and Christ is the object of it, as the soul apprehends him to be full of grace and truth, and sees the infinite value of his merit, and his ability to make good all the promises of the covenant of

l 2 Cor. viii. 5. m Rom. vi. 13. n Chap. xii. 1. o Isa. xlv. 5. p Chap. xlv. 24.

grace, and thereby to render us completely blessed. Our trusting Christ with all we have or hope for, supposes that there is something valuable which we either enjoy or expect; and that we are in danger of losing it, unless it be maintained by him who has undertaken to 'keep' his people 'by his power through faith unto salvation,'^q and to perfect what concerns them. We have souls more valuable than the whole world; and we 'commit the keeping of them to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,'^r and merciful Redeemer, being assured that 'none shall' be able to 'pluck them out of his hand.'^s We also commit all the graces which he has wrought in us to him, to be maintained and carried on to perfection. And since we are assured that all the promises are in his hand, and that he has engaged to make them good to us, we are encouraged to trust him for all that we expect, namely, that he will conduct us safely and comfortably through this world, and at last receive us to glory. In so doing, we have the highest satisfaction, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'We know whom we have believed,' or trusted, 'and are persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed unto him against that day,'^t or the day of his second coming, when grace shall be consummated in glory.

These acts of faith are generally styled, by divines, direct. In performing them, we have more immediately to do with Christ, as our great Mediator, or God the Father in him. As they are, properly speaking, acts of religious worship, the object of them must be a divine person. But there is another sense of the word 'faith,' which as it does not imply any act of trust or dependence as the former does, so it has not God for its immediate object as that has. This is what we call the *reflex* act of faith, or the soul's being persuaded that it believes, or that those acts of faith which have God or Christ for their object are true and genuine. This every one cannot conclude at all times, who is really enabled to put forth those direct acts of faith, which we have been speaking of; and it is the result of self-examination, accompanied with the testimony of the Holy Spirit to his own work. Some indeed have questioned the propriety of the expression which styles this an act of faith; supposing that nothing can be so called, but what has a divine person for its object. But we have already considered that faith, in a sense different from that in which we have now explained it, may be conversant about divine things. Hence, as we may be said, by a direct act of faith, to trust in Christ; so we may be persuaded, by this reflex act, that we do so. And this is more immediately necessary to assurance, together with that joy and peace which we are said to have in believing. [See Note M, page 130.] But this we shall have occasion to insist on under a following Answer.^u

How Faith is Produced.

We are now to consider the grace of faith as that which accompanies salvation, on which account it is called 'a saving grace;' and also that it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit, and by the instrumentality of the word. We do not suppose that every act of faith denominates a person to be in a state of salvation; for there is a mere assent to the truth of divine revelation, which may, in a proper sense, be styled faith; and there may be an external dedication to God, a professed subjection to him, which falls short of that faith which has been described, as it does not proceed from a renewed nature or a principle of spiritual life implanted in the soul. There may be a willingness and a desire to be saved, when the heart is not purified by faith,—a hearing of the word with gladness, a rejoicing for a season, in the light which is imparted by it, and a doing of many things pursuant to this, in persons who shall not be saved. But faith is often described as referring to and ending in salvation. Thus we are said to 'believe to the saving of the soul,'^x and to 'receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.'^y This consists more especially in those acts of faith which contain an entire subjection of all the powers and faculties of the soul to Christ, arising from the views which it has of his glory, and its experience of his almighty power. This is not

q 1 Pet. i. 5.

u See Quest. lxxx.

r Chap. iv. 19

x Heb. x. 39.

s John x. 28.

y 1 Pet. i. 9.

t 2 Tim. i. 12.

only the way to everlasting salvation, but the first-fruits of it. It is such a receiving and resting on Christ for salvation as has been already described.

This grace is farther said to be wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit. We formerly considered effectual calling as a work of divine power, and proved that the Spirit is the author of it,^z and that they who are effectually called are enabled to accept of and embrace the grace offered in the gospel. From this it is evident that faith is the fruit and consequence of our effectual calling; and that, therefore, it must be a work of the almighty power and grace of the Holy Spirit. That it is so, farther appears from the account which we have of it in several scriptures. Thus the apostle Peter, describing those to whom he writes as having 'obtained like precious faith, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' and also as having 'all things that pertain unto godliness,' in which faith is certainly included, ascribes this to 'the divine power.'^a Elsewhere also we read of 'the exceeding greatness of the power' of God exerted 'in them that believe.'^b When the work of faith is carried on, or fulfilled in the souls of those in whom it was begun, it is considered as an effect of the same power.^c And as all that grace which is the effect of divine power is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, when he is said, as acting in subserviency to the Father and Son, to demonstrate his personal glory; so the work of faith, as included in that grace, is represented as his work. On this account he is called 'the Spirit of faith.'^d

But what we shall more particularly consider is, that the grace of faith is wrought by the instrumentality of the word. We have already observed that the principle of grace, implanted in regeneration, is the immediate effect of the divine power, without the instrumentality of the word; but that when the Spirit works faith, and all other graces which proceed from that principle, then he makes use of the word. Thus the apostle says, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'^e As it is necessary, in order to our seeing any object, that the eye be rightly disposed and fitted for sight, and that the object be presented to it; so there are two things necessary to faith, namely, the soul's being changed, renewed, quickened, and so prepared to act this grace, and the object's being presented to it, about which it is to be conversant. The latter is done by the word of God. Hence, the soul is first internally disposed to receive what God is pleased to reveal relating to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ before it believes; and what he is pleased to reveal is contained in the gospel, which is adapted to the various acts of faith, as before described.

As faith implies a coming to Christ, or receiving him; the word of God reveals him to us as giving an invitation to sinners, encouraging them to come to him. Thus our Saviour says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'^f As a farther inducement to come to him, it sets forth the advantages that will attend it, namely, that he will not reject them, how unworthy soever they be. He says, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'^g There are also many other privileges which he will bestow on those who come to him, namely, the blessings of both worlds, grace here, and glory hereafter, all which contain the very sum and substance of the gospel.—Again, if we consider faith as including a giving up ourselves to Christ to be entirely his; the word of God represents him as having an undoubted right to all who do so, inasmuch as they are bought with the price of his blood, given to him as his own by the Father. And as they devote themselves to him to be his servants, it sets before them the privileges which attend his service, as they are delivered from the dominion of sin, and a servile fear and dread of his wrath; and lets them know the ease, pleasure, and delight which there is in bearing his yoke, and the blessed consequences in their having 'their fruit unto holiness, and the end life everlasting.'^h—Further, as faith looks to Christ for forgiveness of sin, in which respect it is called justifying faith; so the word of God represents him to us, as having made atonement for sin,—as set forth to be a propitiation to secure us from the guilt to which we were liable, and from the condemning sentence of the law,—as bearing the curse, and, in consequence, giving

^z See Sect. 'Effectual Calling a Divine Work,' under Quest. lxvii, lxviii.
compared with the third verse.

^b Eph. i. 19.

^c 2 Thess. i. 11.

^a 2 Pet. i. 1.

^d 2 Cor. iv. 13.

^e Rom. x. 17.

^f John vii. 37.

^g John vi. 37.

^h Rom. vi. 22.

us a right to all the privileges of his children. It also represents this forgiveness as full, free, and irreversible; and the soul, by faith, rejoices in its freedom from condemnation, and in that right and title to eternal life which is inseparably connected with it.—Again, as faith includes a trusting or relying on Christ, the gospel represents him as an all-sufficient Saviour, ‘able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;’ⁱ and as faith trusts him for the accomplishment of all the promises, it considers him as having engaged to make them good, inasmuch as ‘in him they are yea and in him amen, unto the glory of God.’^k The believer, therefore, runs no risk, or is at no uncertainty as to this matter; for Christ’s mediatorial glory lies at stake. If there be the least failure in the accomplishment of any promise, or any blessing made over to his people in the covenant of grace which shall be conferred upon them, he is content to bear the blame for ever. But this is altogether impossible, since he who has undertaken to apply the blessings promised, is faithful and true, as well as the Father who gave them. This affords those ‘strong consolation who are fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them’ in the gospel.^l Thus Christ is set forth; and agreeably to this discovery made of him, faith takes up its rest in him, and therein finds safety and peace.

The Degrees of Faith.

We shall now consider faith as strong or weak, increasing or declining; and also the various marks and signs of its being in these respective states. As habits of sin are stronger or weaker, the same may be said concerning habits of grace. It is one thing for them to be entirely lost; and another thing to be in a declining state. Their strength and vigour may be much abated, and their energy frequently interrupted; yet God will maintain the principle of grace, as we shall endeavour to prove under a following Answer.^m Grace is not always equally strong and lively. The prophet supposes it to be declining, when he says, ‘Revive thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years.’ⁿ Our Saviour’s advice to the churches at Sardis and Ephesus implies as much, when he exhorts the former to ‘strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die;’^o and when he bids the church at Ephesus ‘remember from whence they were fallen, and repent and do their first works.’^p Some are said, as Abraham, to be ‘strong in faith, giving glory to God;’^q and others are reprov’d, as our Saviour does his disciples, when he says, ‘O ye of little faith.’^r As our natural constitution is not always equally healthy and vigorous, nor our condition in the world equally prosperous; the same may be said concerning the habits of grace. Sometimes they are strong, and then, as the apostle says concerning his beloved Gaius,^s ‘the soul prospereth,’ and we ‘go from strength to strength,’^t from one degree of grace to another; but at other times, we are ready to ‘faint in the day of adversity,’ and our ‘strength is small.’^u This cannot but be observed by all who are not strangers to themselves, or who take notice of the various frames of spirit which are visible in those whom they converse with.

But it will be inquired, By what marks or evidences may we discern the strength or weakness of faith? Though this will more evidently appear from what will be said under a following Answer,^x when we are led to speak concerning the reason of the imperfection of sanctification in believers; yet we shall not wholly pass it over in this place. Let it be observed, then, that the strength or weakness of faith, is to be judged of by the degree of esteem and value which the soul has for Christ, and the steadiness or abatement of its dependence on him. The greater diffidence or distrust we have of self, and the more we see of our own emptiness and nothingness, the stronger is our faith. On the other hand, self-confidence, or relying on our own strength, is a certain sign of the weakness of our faith.—Again, strong faith is that which carries the soul through difficult duties. Thus the apostle says, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’^y Weak faith, on the contrary,

i Heb. vii. 25.

n Hab. iii. 2.

r Matt. vi. 30.

x See Quest. lxxviii.

k 2 Cor. i. 20.

o Rev. iii. 2.

s 3 John ii.

y Phil. iv. 13.

l Heb. vi. 18.

p Chap. ii. 5.

t Psal. lxxxiv. 7.

m See Quest. lxxix.

q Rom. iv. 20.

u Prov. xxiv. 10.

is ready to sink under the discouragements which it meets with. The former is 'steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;' ^z the latter is like a reed shaken with the wind. Strong faith, as it is said of Job, ^a blesses God when he strips him of all earthly enjoyments, and rejoices that the soul is 'counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;' ^b and it carries the believer above those fears which have a tendency to deject and dishearten him. 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' ^c Weak faith, on the contrary, is borne down with discouragements. The believer under its influence finds it hard to hold on in the performance of his duty; and sees mountains of difficulties in his way, in consequence of which he is ready to conclude that he shall not be able to get safely to his journey's end. He does not rightly improve the consideration of the almighty power of God, and his faithfulness to his promise, in which he has engaged that 'the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' ^d When we sustain losses and disappointments in the world, or things go contrary to our expectation, we are ready to say with the psalmist, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' ^e We sometimes conclude also, that we have no interest in the love of God, because the dispensations of his providence are afflictive, and fill us with great uneasiness. In this case, fear looks upon every adverse providence, as it were, through a magnifying glass, and apprehends it to be but the beginning of sorrows; for it cannot say with the prophet, 'I will trust and not be afraid;' ^f for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. ^g—Moreover, the strength or weakness of faith may farther be discerned by our enjoying or being destitute of communion with God,—our conversing with him in ordinances, or being deprived of this privilege. We may conclude our faith to be strong, when we can say as the apostle does, 'Our conversation is in heaven,' or we live above. But when, on the other hand, we have too great an anxiety or solicitude about earthly things, and an immoderate love to the present world, we may conclude our faith to be weak.—The difference between strong and weak faith may also be discerned by the frame of our spirit in prayer. When faith is strong, the soul has a great degree of boldness or liberty of access to the throne of grace,—a greater measure of importunity and fervency, accompanied with an expectation of the blessings prayed for, by a secret and powerful intimation from the Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication; whence it infers that he who excites this grace will encourage it, as he 'says not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.' ^h—We might add, that strong faith may likewise be discerned, when it is accompanied with an assurance of an interest in Christ's righteousness, and of our right and title to eternal life founded thereon, or that God will guide us by his counsel and afterwards receive us to glory, and a persuasion wrought in the soul by the Spirit that nothing shall separate us from his love. Weak faith is attended with many doubts concerning our interest in Christ; sometimes fearing that our former hope was no other than a delusion, our present experiences not real. The ground we stand on sinks under us; and we are ready to conclude that we shall one day fall by the hands of our spiritual enemies. When I speak of these doubts and fears as an evidence of weak faith, I do not say that they are ingredients in faith; for they are to be considered rather as a burden and encumbrance which attends it. Hence, though there be some good thing in us towards the Lord our God, or a small degree of faith like a grain of mustard-seed, these doubts proceed from the weakness of faith, as opposed to that which is strong, and which would denote the soul to be in a happy and flourishing condition.

The Use of Faith in a Believer's Life.

We are now led to speak concerning the use of faith in the whole conduct of our lives; as every thing which we do in an acceptable manner, is said to be done by it. It is one thing occasionally to put forth some acts of faith, and another thing to live

^z 1 Cor. xv. 58.

^a Job i. 21.

^b Acts v. 41.

^c Psal. cxii. 7.

^d Job xvii. 9.

^e Psal. lxxvii. 9.

^f Isa. xii. 2.

^g Chap. xxvi. 4.

^h Chap. xlv. 19.

by faith. As the latter is the most noble and excellent life ; so nothing short of it can, properly speaking, be called a good life, how much soever many are styled good livers who are wholly strangers to the grace of faith. The apostle Paul speaks of this way of living, and considers it as exemplified in himself, when he says, ‘The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.’ⁱ He speaks of faith as his constant work, or that which ran through the whole business of his life. Whether we are engaged in civil or in religious duties, they are all to be performed by faith.

1. Here we shall consider the life of faith, first, as it discovers itself in all the common actions of life. In these we act as men ; but the faith which is the principal ingredient in them, and their chief ornament, denotes us to walk as Christians. This we are said to do when we receive every outward mercy as the purchase of the blood of Christ, as well as the gift of his grace, and consider it as a blessing bestowed by a covenant-God, who, together with outward things, is pleased to give himself to us ; which infinitely enhances the value of the blessing, and induces us to receive it with a proportionable degree of thankfulness.—Again, we live by faith when we sit loose from all the enjoyments of this world, not taking up our rest in them as if they were our portion or chief good ; so that the esteem and value we have for them is very much below that which we have for things divine and heavenly. When we use the things of this life to the glory of God, and account the best outward enjoyments nothing if compared with Christ ; or when, as the apostle says, ‘we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and do count them but dung, that we may win Christ ;’^k our exercising faith in this way will quiet our spirits under afflictions, and induce us to submit to the disposing providence of God when our best outward enjoyments are removed, or we called to suffer the loss of all things for Christ’s sake, or by his sovereign will.—Further, we live by faith when all the success which we hope for in our secular employments, is considered as a display of that care which Christ takes of his people, in which he overrules and orders all things for his own glory, and their welfare. We are, in consequence, persuaded that he will cause whatever we take in hand to prosper, provided he sees that it is best for us ; and if not, we are disposed to acquiesce in his will. This is such an instance of faith as will put us upon doing every thing in the name and to the glory of Christ, and fortify us against any disappointment which may attend our expectation in every employment wherein we are engaged.—Further, we live by faith when outward blessings, instead of proving a snare and temptation to draw off our hearts from Christ, are a means to bring us nearer to him ; so that if our circumstances are easy and comfortable in the world, and we have more frequent opportunities offered to us to engage in religious duties than others, we are accordingly inclined to embrace them ; while every thing we enjoy, as an instance of distinguishing favour from God, above what many in the world do, excites in us a due sense of gratitude, and an earnest desire and endeavour to use the world to his glory.—Again, we live by faith when adverse providences, which sometimes have a tendency to drive the soul from Christ, and occasion repining thoughts, as though the divine distributions were not equal, are made of use to bring us nearer to him, so that whatever we lose in the creature, we look for and endeavour to find in him ; when, with a submissive spirit, we can say that he does all things well for us, as we hope and trust that he will make even those things which run counter to our secular interests subservient to our eternal welfare ; and when, in consequence, we endeavour to keep up a becoming frame of spirit, in such a condition of life as has a tendency to cast the soul down and fill it with great disquietude.—Again, we live by faith when we devote and consecrate all we have in the world to God, considering that, as we are not our own but his, so all we have is his ; when, in consequence, we are endowed with a public spirit, desirous to approve ourselves blessings to mankind in general, to the utmost of our power ; and when, after having done all, we not only say with David, ‘Of thine own we have given thee,’^l but say as our Saviour taught his disciples to do, ‘We are unprofitable servants.’—Finally, the life of faith discovers itself in the government of our affections, namely, as they are

i Gal. ii. 20.

k Phil. iii. 8.

l 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

kept within due bounds, set upon right objects, and rendered subservient to promote Christ's glory and interest. We are prevented from setting our affections immoderately on the things of this world, when faith shows us that there are far better things to draw them forth, which deserve our highest love. It also prevents our being worldly and carnal; as though we were swallowed up with the things of sense, and had nothing else to mind, and religion were only to be occasionally engaged in; or as though an holy, humble, self-denying frame of spirit were inconsistent with worldly business. Faith suggests the contrary; it puts us upon making religion our great business, and engaging in secular affairs rather as a necessary avocation than as the chief end of living. It also puts us upon glorifying Christ in our secular concerns, as we manage them in such a way as he ordains. By faith the believer is kept in a spiritual frame, while abiding with God in the calling to which he is called. This we attribute more especially to the grace of faith, not only as it is connected with other graces, and, as will be observed under our next Head, excites them, but as it has its eye constantly fixed on Christ as its object, and by this steers its course, and takes an estimate of the valuableness and importance of all the affairs of this life by their subserviency to our salvation, and the advancement of his glory.

2. Faith discovers itself in the performance of all religious duties, and in the exercise of all other graces. Thus, we read of the prayer of faith, whereby a soul has access to God as to a father, in the name of Christ, firmly relies on the promises which are established in him, and has a liberty to plead with him, and a hope of acceptance in his sight. Moreover, when we wait on God to hear what he has to impart to us in his word, faith, having experienced some degree of communion with him already, and had some displays of his love, puts the soul upon desiring more. Accordingly, the psalmist says, 'My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.'^m And whatever other ordinances of divine appointment we are engaged in, we are encouraged by faith to hope for his presence and draw nigh to him in them, with a reverential fear, and delight in him.—Faith also puts us upon the exercise of those graces which are necessary for the right performance of gospel-worship in general. These are not only joined with it, but may be said to be excited by it; so that faith is, as it were, the principle of all other graces. Thus, when the heart is drawn forth in love to Christ, it may be said that 'faith worketh by love.'ⁿ When this love is accompanied with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' this we have in a way of 'believing.'^o What tends to excite the grace of love, is the view which faith takes of Christ's mediatorial glory and excellencies, and of the obligations we are under to love him from his love to us. This is a strong motive, inducing us to express our love to him by universal obedience; which is called 'the obedience of faith.'^p—Again, when we exercise the grace of repentance, and thereby hate and turn from all sins, and are, in a peculiar manner, sensible, as we ought to be, of the sin of unbelief, it is faith which gives us this sense of unbelief, as it is best able to see its own defects. When we confess sin, or humble ourselves before God for it, faith views it not only as a violation of the divine law, but as a display of the highest ingratitude. When we desire, in the exercise of repentance, to forsake sin, faith makes us sensible of our own weakness, and puts us upon a firm and steadfast dependence on Christ to enable us to do so. When, in the further exercise of repentance, our consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, and unbelief is ready to suggest that our sins are so heinously aggravated that there is no room to hope for pardoning mercy, faith relieves us against these despairing thoughts, and encourages us to wait for the mercy of God, who will 'abundantly pardon,'^q and with whom there is 'forgiveness, that he may be feared.'^r—Again, when we use endeavours to mortify sin, we are to do so by a fiducial view of Christ crucified; and when we encourage ourselves to hope that the indictment brought against us for it was nailed to the cross of Christ, that there is 'no condemnation to us' as being in him,^s and that, as the apostle says, 'our old man is crucified with him,

^m Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2.

^q Isa. lv. 7.

ⁿ Gal. v. 6.

^r Psal. cxxx. 4.

^o 1 Pet. i. 8.

^s Rom. viii. 1.

^p Rom. xvi. 26.

that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should no longer serve sin,^t all this is to be done by faith.—We might observe, also, that the grace of patience is connected with and is incited by faith. The apostle^u joins faith and patience together, as supposing that faith affords a motive to patience. Elsewhere, too, in the account which we have of the great things which the Old Testament saints did and suffered by this grace, we read of what great things patience enables us not only to do but to bear. Hence, whatever graces are exercised under the afflictions of the present life, faith excites in us a resignation to the will of God, and considers them as the chastisements of a merciful Father, and as ‘bringing forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby ;^x and we are encouraged to bear them with such a composed frame of spirit that they seem light, and not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. This, faith has constantly in view, setting one against the other ; so that what would otherwise be a hinderance to us in our way, is improved by us to our spiritual advantage ; and we are enabled to go on, not only safely, but comfortably, till we arrive at the full fruition of what we now behold at a distance, and rejoice in the fiducial expectation of.

How Faith is Attained or Increased.

We are now brought to consider how faith is to be attained or increased, and what are the means conducive to these ends. Though faith, in common with all other graces, is wrought in us by the power of God, yet we are far from asserting that there is no duty incumbent on us, in the performing of which we are to hope and wait for the divine blessing, upon which all the success of it depends. To deny this, would give just occasion to charge the doctrine of efficacious grace with leading to carnal security or licentiousness ; a charge which many bring against it without ground. Though grace and duty are very distinct, they are not inconsistent with each other ; the former is God’s work, the latter our act.

The duties required of us, considered as expecting the divine grace and blessing to attend them, are a diligent waiting on God in all his ordinances,—looking into the state of our souls, by impartial self-examination,—calling to mind our past miscarriages, and what matter of humiliation we have for them in the sight of God, as also our natural aversion and inability to do what is good, our need of Christ’s righteousness to take away the guilt we have contracted, and of his strength to subdue our corruptions and enable us to plead earnestly with him for these privileges. As for the unregenerate, they must pray and wait on him for the first grace, and say with Ephraim, ‘Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.’^y They must be earnest with him that he would bestow upon them the grace of faith, which is styled his gift ; that he would remove everything which is at present an obstacle or hinderance to this grace, and also all the prejudices which corrupt nature has entertained against Christ and the way of salvation by him ; and that he would shine into their souls, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ, reveal his arm, and incline them, by the internal working of his power, to receive the grace which is held forth in the gospel. These are duties incumbent on persons who are not called effectually, being destitute of regenerating grace. But, on the other hand, they who have ground to conclude that they have experienced this grace, though at present they apprehend that their faith is weak and on the decline, must be found waiting on God in his own way, and be importunate with him in prayer for the revival of his work, that so they may recover their former experiences. They must bless him for the privileges they once enjoyed, and be humbled for their past backslidings, whereby they have provoked him to withdraw from them. They must say with the church, ‘I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now ;’^z and, as it is elsewhere expressed, ‘Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ; so will we render the calves of our lips.’^a They must lament the dishonour which they have brought to

^t Rom. vi. 6.
^z Hos. ii. 7.

^u Heb. vi. 12.
^a Chap. xiv. 2.

^x Chap. xii. 11.

^y Jer. xxxi. 18.

God; and consider how, by means of it, they have grieved the Holy Spirit, wounded their own consciences, and made work for a bitter repentance and humiliation before God. They must be sensible that it is the same hand which wrought grace in them at first, which must now recover them from their fallen state, and, by exciting the principle of grace implanted, bring them into a lively frame. And when he has done this, they must still depend on him to maintain this frame of spirit; considering that as the beginning so the progress of grace is owing to him who is the author and finisher of faith, who worketh in us that which is pleasing in his sight, and carries on his own work to perfection.

NOTE I. *The connexion of Faith with Justification.*—If there were a necessity for calling faith ‘the hand of the soul,’ ‘the appropriating act,’ or ‘the medium,’ ‘the condition,’ or ‘the instrument of justification,’ or for applying to it any other name or description whatever not used in scripture, there would be intense interest in the discussions of theological writers as to which name or description is the most proper. All evangelical divines discard at once such names as obviously assign to faith a meritorious character, or represent it either as the sinner’s own act, or as the reason of his obtaining justification; but while, for the most part, they retain or select terms not found in scripture, and apparently to them somewhat expressive, they seem, in a considerable degree, embarrassed to harmonize the use of them with strict notions of the immediate connexion of justification with the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and of its being an act of God extraneous to the sinner, and affecting not his understanding or his heart, but his condition in reference to the divine law. In one instant the sinner lives, or passes from death to life: he lives as to both his acceptance with God, and his experiencing the commencement of personal holiness. On the grounds of Christ’s merits he passes from under condemnation, and by the power of the Divine Spirit, he passes from under the uncontrolled dominion of depravity; in the former respect, he begins to live in his position towards the divine law, and in the latter, he begins to live in his experience of personal holiness; in the one view, he becomes alive to God, in being accepted in the Beloved, and in the other view, he becomes alive to God, in being a subject of the work of the life-giving, the sanctifying Spirit. In other words, he is at once justified and regenerated: he, at the same instant, is accepted of him who justifies the ungodly, and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. He is not first regenerated and then justified, or first justified and then regenerated; but, in one change, in one transition, in one event, he begins to live both from the death of condemnation and the death of sin. What he receives is life; and this, though widely different in its aspect as to his relation to the divine law and its aspect as to his personal character, is strictly one in its nature, and one in its commencement—it is eternal life—life together with Christ: not for one instant, or in any circumstances, can we conceive of the life of acceptance with God existing apart from the life of begun personal holiness, or the life of begun personal holiness existing apart from the life of acceptance with God. The two are not distinct or separate lives, but the one life of the soul viewed respectively in its enjoyment of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and in its being the subject of the operations of the Divine Spirit.

Now, if there is, in point of fact, no priority in the order of justification and regeneration, and if the two, however different in their aspects and references, constitute jointly the instantaneous commencement of one spiritual life, there can be neither wisdom nor correctness of thinking in setting up and advocating doctrines based on the assumption, not only of the priority of the one to the other, but of the priority of occurrences belonging respectively to each. Yet it is a taking for granted of the latter sort of priority which occasions all speculations and disputes as to the relative connexion which faith has with justification. Most theological writers assume that faith goes before justification, and, in consequence, institute an inquiry as to whether it is the condition, the instrument, or the medium of our being justified; and a few assume it to follow justification, and become divided in opinion as to whether it appropriates the righteousness of Christ, or, as the hand of the soul, receives the pardon which has been granted, or as to whether there are not even two justifications,—one going before faith, and constituting the sinner righteous by union to the Saviour, and another following faith, and constituting him happy in the reception of the peace which results from his acceptance. These opinions all indicate embarrassment in so adjusting the position and describing the character of faith, as strictly and clearly to maintain that justification is altogether of grace, an act of God, and based on the righteousness or sacrificial merits of the Saviour. Evangelical writers justly regard the exhibition of this doctrine in its integrity and in perfect lucidness as of essential importance; but they see, at the same time, that faith has a connexion with justification altogether inseparable,—that wherever a sinner is justified he is necessarily a believer,—and they endeavour, each class in his own way, so to speak of the act of believing and the event of being justified, that while the latter is viewed as wholly of grace, the former shall be regarded as indispensable or co-existent. Most of them, however, lose sight of justification being strictly *an act*, and not a process, or a series of acts; and in proportion as they do this, they depart from the simple phraseology of scripture, and involve their ideas in obscurity. Every epithet, every mode of discussion, in particular, which represents a priority of a sinner’s believing to his being justified, entails consequences which, if not directly at war with the doctrine of grace, can be kept in apparent amity with it only by means of manifold and not very luminous explanations.

Dr. Ridgely justly objects to faith being called the *condition* of justification, because, as he observes, “the word condition is generally used to signify that for the sake of which a benefit is conferred.” Yet he adds, that “the word may be explained in such a way as is consistent with the doctrine of justification by faith;” and he afterwards proceeds to speak of faith both as “the condition of our claim to Christ’s righteousness,” and as “the medium of our concluding that we have

an interest in Christ's redemption." What he maintains is that, in speaking of the forgiveness of sin, the putting on of Christ's righteousness, or the receiving of discharge from condemnation, the word 'condition' as applied to faith is wrong, and that the word then proper to be used is instrument. He would hence appear to make faith an instrument *before* the act of acquittal, and a condition or a medium *after* that act,—the instrument of our receiving or having imputed to us Christ's righteousness, and the condition or medium of our concluding ourselves to have an interest in it, or experiencing a sense of acceptance. If I do not mistake the import and tendency of his distinction, he thus exhibits faith as both anterior and subsequent to the justifying act; so that, to be consistent, he must be viewed as exhibiting two acts of faith, each distinct in quality and office from the other, and holding a different place in the order of priority. I am quite convinced, indeed, that he never would have adopted any such consequence; and I mention it, only to show the confusion of idea occasioned by instituting distinctions of consecutiveness in the parts or connexions of justification, and applying to them epithets unsanctioned by scripture.

Even the word 'instrument' which Dr. Ridgeley prefers to express the main connexion of faith with justification, and which, if any distinction of priority were allowable, is probably the least objectionable term which can be found, is defined and illustrated by him in such a manner as to become but in a small degree less offensive than the phraseology which he rejects. "When we are said," he observes, "to be justified by faith, it is by faith as apprehending, pleading, or laying hold on Christ's righteousness;" and to illustrate what he means by it as an instrument, he says, "If a person were in a dungeon, as the prophet Jeremiah was, and a rope were let down to draw him out, his laying hold on it is the instrument, but the hand which draws him out is the principal cause of his release." Now, there is a life, an activity, a conditional connexion, a concurrent agency, in the idea of the endunged person seizing a rope and clinging to it while another person draws him from his dungeon, which is utterly repugnant to the doctrine of the sovereign and entirely divine agency of justification. So very much, in fact, of the idea of concurrent agency or concurrent causation is involved in the so-called instrumentality, that Dr. Ridgeley speaks of the hand which draws the prisoner out as 'the *principal* cause of his release,'—clearly implying that what he terms 'the instrument' is, in reality, a cause, and a cause not the less necessary and active that it is merely subordinate. He obviously does not mean to teach what his language imports; yet, in nearly all he says respecting faith as an instrument—not only in his illustration of it from a pardoned criminal pleading his pardon and rendering his claim to it visible in open court before he obtains his discharge, but even in his very definitions—he makes more or less of an impression upon the mind, that it is really more a precurrent though subordinate cause than what may strictly be termed an instrument. The reason of this impression is obvious: an instrument is what is employed by an agent, and faith, when spoken of as the instrument in justification, is represented as employed by *the sinner*, or as that by which *he* lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, or by which *he* pleads that righteousness and receives acquittal. The idea of an instrument is therefore quite as embarrassing to correct notions of the entire sovereignty and divine agency of justification, as that either of medium, of condition, or of anything else on the part of man which is represented as connected with the divine act of acquitting the sinner, and as preceding it; and both it and all kindred ideas—if we would have distinct conceptions of that all-important doctrine—would need either to be better expounded than they usually are, or laid entirely aside.

Yet the invariable, the necessary connexion of faith with justification requires to be fully and prominently stated. But in what terms is the statement so to be made as to be free from objection? Obviously in the very terms of scripture,—in a translation or paraphrase of the expression, *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως* or *δικαιώθεντες ἐκ πίστεως*, as literal, or as faithfully representative of the sense of the Greek words, as English vocables can frame. As regards the connexion of faith with justification, the entire force of either phrase depends upon the preposition *ἐκ*. Now, this word is ill represented in English by the word 'by,' and very rarely, if ever, denotes the relation of strict instrumentality, and still less that of agency or causation. Its literal or primitive meaning is 'of,' or 'out of.' In a figurative sense, or in expressing a moral or abstract relation, its prevailing signification ranges through almost every variety of mode which can be expressed by 'in connexion with,' 'in relation to,' 'out of,' 'from,' 'of.' But what may be regarded as its distinctive or chief use is to give explicitness and energy to the expression of the principal idea conveyed—whether after a noun or after a verb—by the genitive or possessive case of nouns. This idea, according to the definition of Moses Stuart, in his *Grammar of the New Testament Dialect*, "seems to be that of an essential and immediate relation or connexion of objects;" and is so expansive as to include, besides the ideas of other subordinate relations or connexions, those of possession, source, occasion, object, subject, material, quality, place, time, and value. So many of these and other connexions as may be expressed by 'of,' or 'out of,' are just those, or at least are peculiarly or specially those which, with added distinctness and energy, are designated by the preposition *ἐκ*. If any one of them, to the exclusion of every other, were necessarily supposed to be intended in the phrase, *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως*, it would seem to be that of quality,—justification *ἐκ πίστεως* being distinguished, qualifyingly or adjectively, from justification *ἐκ ἐργῶν*. The phrase, however, appears to take *ἐκ*, not in the sense of any one subordinate relation of the possessive case, but in the general sense, or in a sense approaching the general one, of essential and immediate connexion. Justification, in other words, seems to be represented in it, not as *by* faith, or on the condition of faith, or through the instrumentality of faith; but simply as *of* faith,—as inseparably connected with faith. Two texts of scripture—and to these other quotations might be added—will place in a strong light the use of *ἐκ* in so general yet definite a sense of essential connexion as cannot justly be identified with any one subordinate relation designated by the possessive case. In this 'tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with *το οὐκὴτήριον ἡμῶν το ἐξ οὐρανοῦ* our habitation which is of heaven.' 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts *οὐτοῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* your children, how much more shall *ὁ πατήρ ὁ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ* the Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' 2 Cor.

v. 2; Luke xi. 13. Now, in what specific sense of the possessive case can a relation be affirmed between heaven and the glorified body of believers, or between heaven and the Giver of the blessings of salvation? If any specific or subordinate sense whatever can be understood, must it not be one of the dative case,—not that of ‘from’ or ‘of,’ but that of ‘in?’ But, as the case used is actually the possessive, and as *ἐκ* belongs in its invariable use and in all its meanings to that case, what other relation can be intended but the general one—made by its particular application to be expressly specific—of *necessary connexion*? The glorified bodies of believers are necessarily connected with heaven,—they can be enjoyed or can exist only in the heavenly state—they are strictly, as to inseparable relation, *οικητήρια ἐξ οὐρανοῦ*. This idea is not only distinct but graphic, and manifestly would be utterly impaired by any attempt to fuse it into the notion of medium, quality, condition, object, instrumentality, or any other subordinate relation designated by the possessive case.

If, then, the general but emphatic idea of inseparable connexion be a sense of the preposition *ἐκ*, and a sense, from the nature of the case, less secondary than any subordinate idea of possession, quality, or instrumentality, persons who speak in the usual way of the relation between faith and justification, must feel themselves bound to show cause for departing from this sense in interpreting the phrase *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως*. Is there anything in any statement of scripture, or in the scriptural view of the abstract nature either of faith or of justification, to show that the relation between these is one of condition, medium, or instrumentality? Does not every scriptural statement, on the contrary, and every scriptural view, exhibit faith and justification as related simply in the emphatic sense of inseparable connexion? He who believes is justified; and he who is justified believes. A sinner is ‘saved by grace, through faith; and that not of himself: it is the gift of God.’ His believing is as truly a phasis of his salvation as his being justified. He believes through the operation upon his mind of the divine Spirit; and is justified by God’s imputing to him the righteousness of Christ. Both his faith and his justification are of God: the former a gift or grace of the Holy Spirit, and the latter an act of God in Christ,—of the Father imputing the sacrificial merits of the Saviour, and accepting into his sovereign and complacent favour. Nor though differently viewed in the economy of salvation, do they seem, as respects their experience by the sinner, to be otherwise regarded than as constituting, along with regeneration, one event,—as related simply by such inseparable connexion as to be the commencement of his spiritual life. If, by a distinction based upon supposed analogies in human operations, faith may be supposed to go before the imputation of Christ’s righteousness; then, by a similar distinction, life, on the other hand, may be supposed to go before faith, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to go before life. One man, on the footing of human analogies and distinctions, may as truly say that he cannot conceive of the soul’s believing before it be made alive, as another man, on the same footing, may say that he cannot conceive of its being acquitted from condemnation before believing. Hence, to suppose a priority either in the one way or in the other, not only goes beyond the simple statements of the Bible, but tends to produce confusion of idea. Believing, being acquitted on the ground of Christ’s righteousness, and becoming a new creature, occur as one event; and believing and being acquitted are exhibited prominently and constantly as related in inseparable and essential connexion, because faith looks at that truth which both discloses the redemptional work of the Saviour on the ground of which the sinner is made alive, and is the instrument of the divine Spirit in operating upon the soul. The gospel unfolded by the Holy Spirit is ‘the power of God unto salvation;’ it comes in demonstration and in power and in much assurance; it carries with it its own evidence, and cannot be seen without being believed. In the very act, therefore, of the Holy Spirit’s unfolding it, he works faith in the soul. But, in the same instant that the sinner believes he lives,—lives as to both the imputation to him of the righteousness of Christ, and the commencement of personal holiness in his own heart. ‘Faith is the assured expectation *ὑποστάσις* of things hoped for, the conviction *ἐλεγχος* of things not seen.’ It is the act of a living soul, while the act in which the soul begins to live; it realizes, both in conviction as to what he has accomplished, and in confident expectation of glorious and eternal results, the redemptional work of the Saviour; and, if an order of priority could be contended for, it might be viewed both as actually laying hold of Christ’s righteousness, and as exulting or even as existing in a sense of that righteousness being already imputed. So close, so essential, so unique is its connexion with the soul’s acquittal from condemnation, its union to Christ, its resting on his righteousness, its being an object of sovereign favour, that the two cannot be viewed apart in their occurrence or existence. How forcible, then, the apostle’s declaration: ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’ The believing soul is necessarily, from the essential connexion of faith, a soul spiritually alive,—alive in union to Christ, in position toward the divine law, in enjoyment of the divine favour, in experience of the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, and in the commencement of personal and persevering holiness; it is alive in the begun enjoyment of ‘life with Christ in God,’ having its fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. How, then, could the apostles, by preaching faith do otherwise than establish the law? How forcible, too, is the metonymy employed in describing the case of Abraham,—‘his faith was counted to him for righteousness!’ Whether that righteousness be viewed as the righteousness of Christ imputed in justification or as the commencement of personal holiness in regeneration, faith has so essential a connexion with the former, and is so identified with the perception of the truth which the Holy Spirit employs as the instrument of the latter, that wherever it exists, and in the very act of its existing, the one righteousness is imputed and the other righteousness is experienced. A believer is both a justified and a regenerated man: he who has faith in the record which God has given concerning his Son, has eternal life,—he lives both by the imputation to him of the righteousness of his great Surety, and the working of personal righteousness in his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The metonymy is hence peculiarly emphatic: ‘Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.’

Before concluding this note, I may remark how very different the idea of instrumentality is as

applied to the connexion which faith has with justification, and as applied to the relation which the divine word has to regeneration. An instrument, as was already observed, is that which an agent employs in producing an effect, or that in the use of which an agent does or acts. Now the person who is justified is he who believes: he it is who has faith, and who, in popular language on the subject of justification, is said to lay hold by faith on Christ's righteousness, or to receive by faith his acquittal from condemnation, or the pardon of his sins and the acceptance of his person. But this receiving, this laying hold of, this believing, is not the act of justifying. 'It is *God* that justifieth.' Justification is directly, altogether, and in every sense, God's act. The sinner himself, then, being in no respect the agent in justification, and yet being the party who exercises faith, faith cannot be the instrument in justification. But in regeneration, on the contrary, the Holy Spirit is both the agent who regenerates, and he who employs the word in connexion with regenerating. The word regenerates, not as used by man, but as used by the Holy Spirit: it is employed directly and altogether by the Holy Spirit in making man a new creature; and, wielded by him in his own personal agency, it is with propriety regarded as his instrument. Accordingly, the two passages which connect the word with regeneration, (1 Peter i. 23; James i. 18.) represent the relation of the former to the latter to be that of instrumentality. In the one the preposition *δια* with a possessive case is used; and in the other the dative case is used without any preposition. Now *δια*, when governing in the possessive a noun which does not designate a cause or an agent, peculiarly denotes instrumentality; and the dative case in construction with a prior clause designating causation or agency, conveys, without a preposition, emphatically the idea of an instrument. The two passages read, 'Αναγεννημένοι * * * διαλογου ζωτος Θεου και μενοντος.' 'Βουληθεις απεκυησεν ημας λογω αληθειας;' and are translated in the authorized version, 'Being born again by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,' 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.'—ED.]

[NOTE K. *What is Faith?*—Faith is exhibited by Dr. Ridgeley under two phases,—as assent to what is true and good, and as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object. Both these views of faith appear to be entertained with special reference to the faith of the gospel, but at the same time with comprehensive reference to faith in general. Dr. Ridgeley talks of the influences which affect faith,—the kinds and degrees of evidence by which the quality or strength of it is determined; and, while settling what faith is as resting on divine testimony, he glances at its nature as exercised about matters of abstract science or merely human.

Now faith or belief, understand it as we may and apply it as we will, seems to be just assent to evidence,—counting true propositions or statements submitted to the judgment. But though in matters of revelation it is necessarily an assent to what is true and good,—every portion of divine testimony being essentially in the highest sense both good and true; it may, in other matters, particularly in those of human testimony or of flippant report, be an assent to what is both false and mischievous. Men often believe a lie, a malign and insidious falsehood, as really as they believe a truth; and they are affected in their heart and conduct by what they believe, as sensibly for evil if they believe a pestiferous error, as for good if they believe an infallible moral doctrine. Faith, in its own proper nature, is simply assent, opening up the avenues of the soul to have all its affections acted upon, and all its faculties propelled by the moral influences, be they evil or good, human or divine, of the statements believed. Every statement, be it what it may, has power to affect either the intellect or the heart, to modify the ideas, to act upon the faculties, to touch the intellectual or moral habits; and it wields this power immediately over the heart and will, and propels to practical results in the conduct, just in the proportion of its being of a moral nature, addressing itself to the conscience, and unfolding motives to deter from one action and incite to another. Whatever is believed affects man according to the nature of the proposition or statement,—intellectually if it be purely intellectual, morally if it be purely moral, moving the particular power or inciting the particular affection to which it specially appeals. Faith or belief lays hold upon the statement as a matter hitherto extraneous to the man, and brings it to bear upon his intellectual or moral nature as a matter internal to him, or a matter in contact with his mind. So long as any statement is not believed, it is as if it did not exist; but whenever it is assented to, or counted true, or made a matter of faith, it ceases to be a matter of indifference, and operates in a way suited to its own nature, and with a force proportioned to the amount of evidence which sustains it or the degree of faith with which it is received.

The distinction, then, between faith in a statement as simply true, and faith in a statement as both true and good,—a distinction followed out to the result of a speculative assent, in the former case, and a practical assent seated partly in the understanding and partly in the will, in the latter,—seems to be without foundation. Some statements, such as the axioms and elements of mathematical science, contain in themselves nothing which appeals to the moral feelings, and of course do not excite them; yet, whenever they are believed, they affect the mind to the whole amount of their influence, and, so far as they bear upon practice either in thinking or in conduct—in imparting ideas of mental calculation, or furnishing materials and motives for mathematical experiment—even they are really practical. Absolutely speculative believing, or believing which does not modify the thoughts and propel and influence mental or concrete action, seems, in a being constituted like man, an utter impossibility. One statement, indeed, has a practical influence, especially in reference to the will and affections, tenfold, or an hundredfold, or a thousandfold, more than another; but the statement of higher influence differs from the statement of lower influence, not on account of the manner in which it is believed, or on account of its being both true and good while the other is merely true, but on account of its moral nature, or of its containing matter which directly appeals to the conscience or to the fears or desires of the heart. In proportion to the magnitude of moral import in a statement, or to the amount of motive and consideration affecting personal interest which it discloses, combined with the degree of evidence in which it is seen, or the strength of faith with which it is received, will be the energy with which it moves and incites and propels the affections and will. But with regard to even a statement in the highest degree good and true, or dis-

closing the loftiest considerations to affect the heart and the conduct, assent to the truth of it or the act of believing it, is immediately the affair, not of the will, but altogether of the understanding. The act of assent is the act of counting true—it is an intellectual act; and simply brings the statement believed into contact with the affections and will, there to incite the one, and influence the decisions of the other. Except as the statement is counted true, or is brought by belief to disclose its moral influence, it exists entirely apart from the mind, and, as regards the individual, is a mere abstraction. But the counting of it true is not an act of volition, nor an act of desire, nor an act of any affection, but an act of the same intellectual kind as that in which a judgment is formed, or a relation discerned between one object and another. The understanding, discerning something to be affirmed, and perceiving the evidence on which it rests, counts the affirmation to be true; just as the judgment, discerning a substance to exhibit a given quality, affirms the quality and the substance to be related. While the act of judging concerns the relation of ideas in an affirmation or a proposition; the act of believing quite as intellectually concerns the relation of evidence and affirmation in a statement. But an act of the will, on the contrary, has reference only to conduct. A man believes, not because he wills a statement to be true, but because he discerns evidence of its being true. His will may act negatively in effectually indisposing him either to examine the statement or to consider the evidence which supports it; but it does not act positively in reference to the relation between them when they come to be examined. A statement is understood, not by an act of volition, but by being made plain to the understanding; and it is believed or counted true, not because a man wills its truth, but because he discerns evidence which convinces his judgment. ‘With the heart,’ indeed, we are told, ‘man believeth unto righteousness.’ But the correlative phrases ‘heart’ and ‘bowels’ had the same force in Hebrew idiom, which the correlative phrases ‘head’ and ‘heart’ have among us,—the former, in many connexions, designating the understanding, and the latter the will and affections. Among other passages, in which ‘the heart’ has the sense of ‘the understanding,’ see Matt. xiii. 15; Luke xxiv. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 9; Isaiah x. 7. and xlv. 19; Matt. xiii. 19; Eccl. i. 17; Luke ix. 47; John xii. 40; 2 Cor. iii. 15; Eph. iv. 18; Prov. ii. 2, 10; Dan. x. 12.

I may perhaps be reminded, that to regard the belief of divine truth as distinct from any act of the will, is to exhibit faith as prior in occurrence to any renovating influence on the moral powers, and, in consequence, to speak inconsistently with the doctrine maintained in a former note, that faith and regeneration, and whatever things constitute the commencement of spiritual or eternal life in the soul, are of simultaneous origin. But if the view I have now given of faith may, in one respect, be construed to exhibit the exercise or first act of it as prior, it may, in another respect, be construed to exhibit it as posterior, to the influencing of the moral powers. Man’s will, while he is in an unrenewed state, is utterly averse—indeed, without the operation of divine grace upon him, is unconquerably averse—to contemplate the truths of the gospel in their spiritual or only true light; nor is it less averse to let his understanding glance at those high and demonstrative, but spiritual, evidences by which they are evinced to be infallibly free from error and truly divine. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God:’ it performs volitions or acts of the will all in opposition both to the glorious gospel and its claims. Hence, a person who should construe distinctness of ideas into priority of occurrence, might allege just as reasonably that the removal of man’s aversion to contemplate the gospel and its intrinsic evidences must go before faith, as that faith must go before the removal of his aversion to holiness. All which fairly follows from regarding faith as an act of the understanding apart from the will, is the distinctness merely, and not the consecutiveness, of the idea of believing the truth and the idea of the moral influence of the truth affecting the heart. In any case, perhaps, a truth, correspondingly to its nature, affects the moral powers in the very act of its commending itself by its evidence to the assent of the understanding; or, while it discloses its claims in such a manner as to drive unbelief or doubt from the mind, it at the same time puts forth its moral influence to make its appropriate impressions on the will and the heart. But, at all events, the distinctness of assent to truth from the effect of truth on the moral powers, affords no reason for conceiving of any priority of one thing to another in the commencement of spiritual life in the soul—in that wondrous work of the divine grace and power upon man in which a creature who was dead in trespasses and sins becomes alive unto God.

As to faith being “an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object,” Dr. Ridgeley uses language inconsistent with himself. The *object* of faith is not a person but a proposition or a statement; nor is it necessarily or always such a statement or proposition as has a person for its subject. The faith of the gospel, indeed, has for its object statements which all reveal the character of God, and the person respectively of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the economy of redemption. But faith in its own nature—and it is of this Dr. Ridgeley speaks—may deal with statements respecting things as well as with statements respecting persons. A man may believe what is both true and good in science, in human laws, in measures for working out practical results, without reference to any persons by whom the science is elucidated, the laws framed, or the measures constructed. In some instances he is not able, even if he tried, to institute a connexion between what he believes and such views of any person as should modify and still less constitute his faith. Trust, on the other hand, has reference entirely to a person. The difference between it and faith, in fact, is just that the one has a person and the other has a statement for its object. The two are quite distinct in their nature,—faith being an act of the understanding, and trust an act of the heart; and they exist together, and become inseparably connected, only when the statement believed exhibits a person in the relation of a superior, a protector, a benefactor, or a deliverer. A man may believe that certain principles of nursery discipline will tend to form good habits in his children, or he may believe that some neighbour with whom he has dealings possesses inclination and power to thwart him in his well-being; but, in the former case, he has no person brought before the view of his mind by his belief who can be the object of either trust or any other moral affection, and, in the latter case, he regards the person whom his belief exhibits to his view, not with trust, but with dis-

trust and aversion. When, however, the statement which we believe places ourselves in the attitude of inferiors, sufferers, or needy, helpless, guilty, or ruined individuals, and exhibits to us a Being who has inclination and power to protect, deliver, succour, pardon, or bless us, our faith becomes necessarily associated with trust,—faith in the statement, with trust in the person. A belief of the gospel, in particular, is essentially and inseparably accompanied with trust in God. We cannot, on the one hand, know the truth of the gospel, in its genuine light or heavenly evidence, without believing it; nor can we know God in his true character, or as the gospel reveals him, without confiding in his love and depending on his sovereign favour. Yet faith in the divine testimony and trust in the divine character, though inseparable, are perfectly distinct. Dr. Ridgeley himself says, “Though faith,” as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object, “supposes, indeed, an assent of the understanding to some truth proposed; yet this truth is of such a nature that it produces in us a resting or reliance on one who is able, and has expressed a willingness, to do us good, and whose promise is such as we have ground to depend on.” He thus, very justly, connects trust, not like faith with the force of the evidence by which a statement is supported, but with the quality of the truth to which the understanding assents—not with its being a truth which dissipates doubt and produces conviction, but with its being a truth which addresses the moral powers, exhibits us in the condition of dependent beings, and displays to us a Being who has power, inclination, and faithfulness, to do us good. While faith reposes on the gospel as evinced by divine evidence of its truth, trust reposes on God as revealed in that gospel, our gracious benefactor, our deliverer from all evil, and the author of eternal salvation. We trust when we believe, and we believe when we trust; yet, in the one case, we exercise our understanding, and, in the other case, we exercise our will and affections. Hence, faith in the gospel, though always and inseparably accompanied with trust, is no more to be viewed as identical with it, than it is to be viewed as identical with love to God, adoration of his perfections, gratitude for the wondrous displays of his grace, hope of beholding his glory, peace or satisfaction in a sense of his complacency, and desire to be conformed to his image and to act obediently to his holy will. These are as truly elements of spiritual life, and as really inseparable from faith in the gospel, as trust or dependence; and they are also as emphatically exhibited in the divine word as possessed or exercised by every regenerated, every savingly enlightened soul; yet they are not faith itself, but, like trust or dependence, are separately inculcated, and exhibited as matters of distinct conception. Whatever may be said respecting the inculcation of trust, and its existing inseparably with faith, may also be said respecting the inculcation and inseparableness of love or of any other element of renovated character. To speak of trust, therefore, as identical with faith, is to confound distinctions which are at once taught in the Bible, based on correct analyses, and conducive to clearness of conception.

An objection may possibly be stated against the simple view which I have given of the faith of the gospel, that, by exhibiting faith as an act simply of the understanding, and as necessarily connected with the perception of the truth and its evidence, it would seem to make believing altogether human, and not the result of divine operation on the mind. The objection, however, is unfounded. For if man has, without divine influence, an unconquerable aversion to examine the gospel in its spirituality, or to look upon its intrinsic and divine evidences of being true, and if, in connexion with this aversion, he, as a natural man, ‘receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;’ it clearly follows that, how purely intellectual soever the act of believing may be, he can perform it only by having the aversion of his will subdued and the darkness of his mind illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The act of believing is indeed his own—it is not the Holy Spirit but the man himself who believes; yet his faith—as springing from a spiritual exhibition of truth and a convincing display of intrinsic evidence which only God can make to a mind deterred by a perverse will and a depraved heart from contemplating what is spiritual—is truly and emphatically ‘the faith of the operation of God.’—ED.]

[NOTE L. *Are there several kinds of Faith?*—The varieties of character described by Dr. Ridgeley, in his discussion of the various kinds of faith, unquestionably exist, and differ from one another by very obvious, and, in some instances, opposite peculiarities. But what saith the scripture as to the origin and nature of the varieties which respectively distinguish them? Do these varieties consist in the kinds of their faith, or in the kinds of their knowledge, their notions, and their moral feelings? Do the various classes believe in different ways the same thing, or believe in the same way different things or things differently modified and understood? This question—if we consider how grievously perplexed many a religious inquirer has been, and how agitated with suspense and anxiety many a sincere Christian, by discussions respecting different kinds of faith—is well worthy of investigation, and ought to be examined with care.

The faith of miracles, even according to Dr. Ridgeley’s own showing, was a variety, not in the way of believing, but in the thing believed. All his illustrations of it have reference, not to the faith itself, but to the kind of truths with which it was conversant. Without attempting, then, to disturb or dispute any part of the account which he gives of it,—an account which, though questionable perhaps in some subordinate particulars, seems in the main inexpugnable; we may firmly ask on what pretence it is exhibited as a peculiar *kind* of faith? If variety in the nature or classification of truths believed constitutes variety in the species or modes of believing, there must, in reference to the doctrines of the Bible, be a doctrinal faith,—in reference to its precepts, a preceptive faith,—in reference to its promises, a promissory faith,—in reference to its prophecies, a prophetic faith,—in reference to its histories, a historiographical faith,—in reference to its mysteries, a mysterious faith; and there must also, in reference to the respective sciences and avocational pursuits of ordinary life, be a geographical, a geological, a mathematical, an astronomical, a chemical, a botanical, a mineralogical, a conchological, a mercantile, a commercial, an agricultural, a mechanical, and a political faith. But every one sees that these instances, and in a multitude of others, the varieties which exist, are varieties, not in the mode of believing, or in the nature, species, or kind of

faith, but simply and entirely in the things believed,—the classes of truths or principles to which assent is given. Why, then, should a variety in one set of truths only—in those which were concerned with the working of miracles—be regarded as belonging, not to the peculiarity of the truths, but to the peculiar way of believing them?

If the account which Dr. Ridgeley gives of what he calls historical faith, or of what some writers call speculative faith, were true, it would certainly present us with a variety in the mode of believing. “An historical faith is that,” he says, “whereby persons are convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel, though it has very little influence on their conduct. Such have right notions of divine things, but do not entertain a suitable regard to them. Religion with them is little more than a matter of speculation. They do not doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel, but are able and ready to defend them by proper arguments; yet though, in words, they profess their faith in Christ, in works they deny him.” How remarkably does this short description differ in tone at the commencement and at the close! The persons described are said at the outset to be ‘convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel,’—to have ‘no doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel;’ and yet, before the description closes, they come down from their soarings of ‘right notions’ and assured faith of divine things, and are believers only in words and in profession,—‘*in words they profess their faith in Christ, but in works they deny him.*’ So palpable an inconsistency in statement may surely suggest that the entire idea of the persons, or at least of their faith, is erroneous. To *profess* faith,—to ‘*profess faith in words,*’ is as different as can be from ‘having no doubt of doctrines,’ and being ‘convinced of the truth.’ But as, in the latter expressions, Dr. Ridgeley entirely over-estimates what he calls historical faith, and seems almost, if not altogether, to identify it with what he calls saving faith; so, in the former expression, he quite as much under-estimates it, and seems to represent it as no faith whatever. The persons whom he describes, or rather means to describe, do much more than ‘*profess*’ faith or believe merely ‘*in words:*’ they unquestionably believe something respecting revealed truth, and believe it just as really and intellectually as any other matter to which they yield their assent. But *what* do they believe? This is the question of true importance, and the only one of real meaning, respecting them. Do they, as Dr. Ridgeley represents them, believe ‘the truth of what is revealed in the scripture?’ Have they ‘no doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel?’ Do they possess ‘right notions of divine things?’ Far otherwise; for, in this case, they must have been taught of God, and cannot fail to be genuine believers in the Saviour. Wrong notions of divine things, crude and carnal conceptions of the truth revealed in the scripture, positive ignorance and unbelief as to the important doctrines, the true spiritual saving doctrines of the gospel, are what constitute the very peculiarity of their character. If they knew and thought aright respecting the truths of Christianity; if they had right notions, spiritual, genuine, realizing conceptions of divine things; if they saw the great doctrines of the gospel in their true light, and understood them in their momentous and awfully impressive connexion with their own highest interests for time and eternity; they would cease to be spoken of as historical or speculative believers, and be certainly regarded as undoubted Christians. Their conceptions, their notions, their knowledge of the gospel, and not their mode of believing it, is the source of their religious indifference, and the reason of their cold formality. They are to be set right by questioning them, not *how* they believe, but *what* they believe,—not whether they believe in the right way, but whether they believe the right thing. ‘This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ Let those who in words acknowledge Christ but in works deny him, come to the *knowledge* of the truth, let them obtain correct views of the great salvation, let them understand the things of the Spirit of God, and see in the light of heaven—the only light which can disclose it to them in its true colours—the glorious gospel of Christ; and, simply in the correcting of their notions and the enlightening of their understanding, they will possess faith to the saving of the soul. Any man who was once a formal professor, but now, through divine grace, is a sincere and devoted follower of Christ, may most distinctly trace in his own experience a change, a glorious, gorgeous, wondrous change of views, in the transition he made from formality to spiritual life; but he will search long and vainly to trace any difference which occurred in his mode of believing, or in the nature of his intellectual act of faith. Either totally new ideas were presented to his mind, or old ideas were presented in connexions so novel and so solemnly impressive, that a stream of animating, strange, engrossive emotions burst upon his heart and deposited in his affections the germs of all holy thinking and acting. But beyond the reception of new and heavenly light,—a light which shone in upon his mind, and showed all its former notions to be darkness,—and a light which exhibited the gospel as he now saw it in such intrinsic and commanding evidence as to constrain his belief of all its disclosures;—beyond the breaking in of this light, and the glow of abiding emotion which it kindled in his heart, he has no recollection, no consciousness of any change affecting his intellect,—still less of such a change as made him believe in a different manner, or with a different sort of intellectual act, from what he did before.

Some writers regard what they call ‘the faith of devils’ as another and distinct kind of faith. Dr. Ridgeley, however, views the possessors of ‘historical faith’ and devils as believing in the same way. “Such as these,” says he, referring to the former, “the apostle intends when he says, ‘Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.’ He charges them with a vain presumption, in expecting to be justified by their faith; it being without works, or those fruits which were necessary to justify or evince its sincerity, or to prove that it was such a grace as accompanies salvation; and, therefore, he gives it no better a character than that of a dead faith.” Now, a man’s believing that there is one God, if he at the same time believe that he himself is a transgressor, obnoxious to the divine anger, and without any means of escape or hope of obtaining pardon, will, like the belief of any other moral statement, work its appropriate effect, and produce in him terror and dismay. ‘The devils also believe, and tremble.’ On their mind as well as on man’s, a moral statement, when believed, makes impressions corresponding to

its nature. They believe that there is one God, but they know, at the same time, that they have incurred his wrath by their wickedness, that they cannot make amends for their iniquities, that they have no refuge from his righteous indignation; and well may they tremble. But here is no idle, speculative, uninfluential, believing; here is no distinctiveness or peculiarity in the kind of intellectual act performed, here simply is believing accompanied with the common phenomena of all faith,—that the mind which believes is affected in a manner corresponding to the nature of the thing believed. Let a man, while he believes that there is one God, believe at the same time that there is ‘one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;’ let him have distinct conceptions and corresponding belief, on the one hand, of his own ruined and helpless state as a sinner, and, on the other hand, of the fulness, freeness, and glorious adaptation of the divine plan of mercy to save him with an everlasting salvation; and, while pangs of sorrow will rend his heart on account of the number and foulness and aggravations of his sins, he will experience hope toward God, and joy and peace in believing,—he will ‘rejoice in Christ Jesus, and serve God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.’ Let another man, on the contrary, believe that the Creator of the universe and the Judge of all the earth is not God infinite,—that he takes very slender notice of human conduct, and has promulged over his creatures a law of not very rigid holiness,—that his claims upon the religious homage of men do not amount to more than the exaction of attendance on public ordinances on Sabbath, or at most a routine observance of formal worship in the family,—that Christian discipleship includes nothing higher than scientific or didactic acquaintance with the narratives and doctrines of the Bible,—and that the work of redemption secures salvation to all who come up to this standard of discipleship, and are free from offensive wickedness; and this man, correspondingly to the nature of the principles which he believes, will be a formalist, a merely nominal Christian, ‘having the form of godliness and denying its power.’ But the difference between him and the former character, is a difference, not in the manner of believing, but in the things believed; it is not that the one has a historical faith or a faith of devils, while the other has a faith of totally another kind, but that the one believes principles which his depraved mind has transmuted and falsified from the statements of the Bible, while the other believes the very doctrines of the gospel, made plain to his understanding by light from heaven, and unfolded to him in their evidence and impressed upon him in their power by the operation of the Holy Spirit; and both persons, while believing widely different things, exemplify in their respective experience that every man, believe what he may, is affected in his heart and conduct according, not to the manner of his believing, but to the nature and moral influence of the principles which he believes.

The apostle James’ distinction, then, between dead faith and living faith, has reference entirely to the nature of the results which follow, or to the kind and amount of moral influence exerted on the heart. A man who calls himself a believer in the gospel, but does not feel and act like a converted man, has a faith which, as to all the activities of Christian character, is ‘dead,’ and which, therefore, falls far short of resting on those words which are ‘spirit and life,’—‘the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ Such a man may ‘say’ that he believes the testimony which God has given concerning his Son; but he no more really believes it, than a man who says to a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, ‘Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, yet gives them not those things which are needful to the body,’ is really possessed of Christian benevolence. As, in the latter case, there is an utter destitution of the fraternal sympathy pretended; so, in the former, there is an utter destitution of the faith professed. The character described is not one who believes the gospel, but believes it in a wrong way; but he is one who does not believe it at all, or who believes only such caricatures and falsifications of it as make it quite ‘another gospel,’ and not the gospel of the grace of God,—not ‘the truth as it is in Jesus.’

In addition to the faith of miracles and historical faith—with the appendages which some writers make to the latter, of the faith of devils and dead faith—Dr. Ridgeley speaks also of temporary faith. This, he says, “differs from historical faith, only in being of short and uncertain duration, and in having a tendency, in some measure, to excite the affections, and so far to regulate the conduct as to produce in those who have it a form of godliness.” He quotes, however, only one text in which he alleges it to be mentioned, and not one in which it is called faith or believing the gospel. Our blessed Lord speaks of a class of persons who ‘hear the word, and anon with joy receive it, yet who have not root in themselves, but endure for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.’ These are the persons who, it is alleged, have temporary faith, or believe the gospel in a different manner or by a different sort of act from both historical and saved believers. But is it not apparent, at a glance, that they actually do not believe the gospel,—that ‘they have no root in themselves,’—that, strangers to divine grace, they want that spiritual illumination, those correct notions of divine things, which are essential to a belief of ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’—that, while they ‘receive the word,’ and receive it ‘with joy,’ they have mistaken views of its import, and cherish very different hopes, or hopes based on very different foundations, from those which it sanctions,—that, therefore, like all formal or hypocritical professors of Christian discipleship, they are distinguished, not by believing right principles in a wrong way, but by believing principles which come far short of those spiritual, realizing views which are included in a real knowledge of the gospel? A conception that the doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary atonement opens a more luxurious way to heaven, than the doctrine of penance and self-mortification; a notion that the gospel relaxes the severity of the law, and substitutes a sincere or a well-intended for a perfect obedience; an idea that Christianity conceals every awful manifestation of the divine character, and reveals God in an aspect of general or indiscriminate mercy; even the low and grovelling fancy so powerful over many pretended followers of Christ in the days of his personal ministry, and so powerful still over multitudes living in circumstances where Christianity is fashionable or a matter of conventional propriety, that important temporal benefits, a good name in the world, social advantage, prosperity in temporal interests, may be attained by professing Christian discipleship;—any of these may, and all of them often have been, quite sufficient to

stamp upon men the character of the persons described in our Lord's parable,—to make them men who 'hear the word and anon with joy receive it,' but who have no root in themselves, and who, 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by are offended.' But do I need to point out that what ruins them is not wrong faith, but wrong principles,—that they err, not by believing the truth in a wrong way, but by transmuting the truth into error, and resting their faith upon the latter?

The last kind of faith of which Dr. Ridgeley speaks is what he calls 'saving faith,' and what some writers call 'evangelical faith.' What is thus denominated is the faith of a true disciple,—a subject of divine grace, or of the operations of the Holy Spirit,—a believer of the gospel rightly understood, and experienced in its power. Now the faith of such a man is unquestionably a grace; it springs from the special work of the Divine Spirit on the soul, and cannot be produced or attained by man's own efforts. But is it therefore different as to the mode in which it is performed, or as to the kind of intellectual act in which it is exercised, from faith as directed to other statements than those of the gospel? A natural man cannot of himself believe, just because he cannot of himself *know*, the things of the Spirit of God. He is unable to attain faith in spiritual, correct, realizing views of the gospel, not because they must be believed by a mode of intellectual acting to which he is a stranger, but because 'they are foolishness to him, and are spiritually discerned.' He cannot of himself see either the reality or the intrinsic evidence of the gospel; and, hence, must owe the faith which he may afterwards possess in it to the grace of God, to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can disclose it in that reality and evidence to his mind. He, accordingly, differs from a merely nominal or hypocritical professor of Christianity, not by the peculiar manner in which his mind operates or acts when believing, but by the divine illumination which he enjoys,—by his perception, in heavenly light, of the doctrines of salvation, and the evidences which demonstrate them to be true. The apostles, when contrasting the natural and the spiritual state of true Christians, or when speaking of the transition in which they became believers in Christ, make no allusion to the commencement in them of a new and peculiar way of believing, but describe them as having been formerly in darkness, but now light in the Lord,—as having received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus,—as having had the eyes of their understanding enlightened,—as having been called into God's marvellous light. Whatever change is effected by grace on the intellect or understanding, they describe, not once as consisting in any new capacity imparted to it, or in its commencing to believe in a different manner or with a different sort of acting from before, but always as consisting in its being enlightened by heavenly teaching and convinced by heavenly evidence,—in its acquiring spiritual knowledge or correct ideas of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Nor, when they addressed the ungodly and called on them to believe in Christ, do they ever seem to have entertained their hearers with discussions respecting kinds of faith, or to have once hinted that believing the gospel was a different sort of intellectual act from believing ordinary statements. They appear, on the contrary, to have expended their whole concern in getting men to believe the right thing,—in placing luminously and impressively before them the great truths which were requisite to be believed; and whether preaching these truths to Jews or to Gentiles, whether calling upon Greeks or barbarians, upon bond or free, upon the philosophers of Athens or the savages of the wilderness to believe them as the truths of salvation, they seem to have always taken for granted that their hearers knew well what believing or faith was. When men were duly instructed as to the doctrines they should believe, and as to the absolute necessity of looking to the Holy Spirit to explain and enforce them, their apostolic instructors, without adding a word respecting the nature of believing, seem to have declared to them what they esteemed 'the whole counsel of God.' One text, indeed, though only one, has the appearance of defining faith: 'Now faith is the confident expectation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. These words, however, are not a definition of faith, but a description; and they describe it, not in itself, but in its results. By a metonymy—one of the most common rhetorical figures either in ordinary language or in the sacred scriptures—they speak of faith, not in the act of performance, but in the habit of mind and state of moral feeling which that act induces, and represent it as a settled conviction of unseen realities and a confident hope of blessings hereafter to be enjoyed. They thus exhibit faith in the divine and life-giving and saving doctrines of the gospel, like faith in all the variety of sphere in which it is exercised, as affecting the heart and all the powers of the soul in exact accordance with the nature of the statements believed.

Dr. Ridgeley makes still another distinction as to kinds of faith—he distinguishes between 'saving faith' and 'justifying faith.' "There is this difference," says he, (last sentence of the section, "Inferences from the doctrine of Justification,") "between saving faith, as we generally call it, and justifying faith,—the former respects Christ in all his offices, the latter considers him only in his priestly office, or as set forth to be a propitiation for sin." Now, the real distinction in this case is, that justification is correlative with our Lord's work of atonement, while salvation is correlative with his whole work as mediator. But if, for this reason, faith in connexion with entire salvation is to be distinguished from faith in connexion with justification, it must also, for reasons exactly similar and of equal strength, be distinguished from faith in connexion with sanctification, with prayer, with consolation, with hope, with resistance of temptation, and with triumph over the last enemy; or if belief of the doctrines which have reference to our Lord's entire mediatorial work must be distinguished from belief of the doctrines which have reference to his work of atonement, it must also be distinguished from belief of those doctrines which have reference to his intercessory work, to his character as the head of the church, to his kingly government, to his second advent and judging the world, to the various works of the Holy Spirit, to the characters in which the Father is revealed in the economy of redemption, and to all the various manifestations of Deity, by prophecy, promise, teaching, or miracle, made or narrated in the divine word. The varieties, kinds, or subdivisions of saving faith, would, in consequence, be unmanageable in their number and perfectly bewildering in their affinities. But the oracles of truth,—'majestic in their own simplicity,' and gloriously alien in their manner

from the 'complex' and mystifying conceptions of human reason—speak of the faith of the gospel, in all its parts, in all its offices, from its commencement in justification till its being matured into vision in the perfecting of the soul at death, in uniform phraseology, and under the one unqualified epithet of faith. They represent the sinner, when made alive to God, as justified by faith,—when conflicting with the world, as overcoming it by faith,—when sanctified by the Divine Spirit, as having their hearts purified by faith,—when approaching the throne of God in prayer, as drawing nigh in the full assurance of faith,—when standing in the grace of God, and rejoicing in the hope of his glory, as having access to it by faith,—when experiencing communion with Christ, as having him dwelling in their hearts by faith,—when walking with God, and living in union with the Saviour, as walking and living in faith,—when working righteousness, obtaining promises, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, becoming strong out of weakness, waxing valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens, seeing the promises afar off and being persuaded of them and embracing them, as doing all and embracing all through faith. In every part of salvation, whether justification or whatever else, they are simply said to believe. Though the particular truths on which their minds rest are different in different epochs, emergencies, relations, or works, their faith, as regards both its intrinsic nature and the divine illumination which exhibits to it the truth and its evidence, is strictly one.—ED.]

[NOTE M. *Acts of Faith, Direct and Reflex.*]—What is the impression which Dr. Ridgeley's account of the various acts of saving faith would have upon the mind of a perplexed religious enquirer, or a young and feeble believer? Would he not conclude that all the acts, in the distinctness with which they are described, are performed in the instant of the commencement of spiritual life,—that receiving Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King, a persuasion and an acknowledgment of his right to us by his purchase as Mediator, a surrender of ourselves to him in the way of solemn dedication to his service and animated hope of his working out our entire well-being, a soul-emptying sense of our own nothingness, a dependence on the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God, and an assured reliance or confidence in him for perfecting all which concerns us, are consciously experienced in the first moment of believing, or are all ingredients in the faith of a Christian in what circumstances or degree soever it is exercised? He would next think of his own experience; and, though for a while he might feel merely bewildered, agitated, or alarmed, he would be in hazard of sooner or later settling down into despondency, and writing bitter things respecting his soul. "If faith," he would be apt to say, "has so many acts, and these so distinct, so comprehensive, and involving such enlarged views of the divine character, and such emotions and purposes of self-emptying, hope, and holy confidence, I cannot, no, I cannot think otherwise than that I am an unbeliever,—just as much a stranger to faith as the most ungodly man who lives." How reviving to such a smitten soul would be the somewhat startling question, "Then, since you are an unbeliever, it is a matter of perfect indifference to you whether Christ is God or a mere man, or whether he died for you on the cross and intercedes for you in heaven, or not?" "O, no!" he might exclaim; "any thing is indifferent rather than the glorious truths of the gospel. But for Christ's being just what the Bible represents him, the Great God our Saviour who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, I am certainly and eternally ruined. No; no; the truth respecting Christ is not and cannot be a matter of indifference." The man would thus evince that he really believes, that Christ is precious to him, that he rejoices in Christ Jesus, serves God in the spirit and has no confidence in the flesh. Yet he is thrown into bewilderment and despondency by a systematic exhibition to him of 'the various acts of faith.' Talk to him of the ingredients, and acts, and exercises, and excursions of believing—telling him that faith is identical with all—and he sits down in darkness and sorrow; but talk to him of the life-giving doctrines of the gospel, the exhibitions they give of the divine character and the statements they make of the grace and love and mediatorial work of the Redeemer, and he walks abroad in the light of heaven, and goes on his way rejoicing.

What Dr. Ridgeley writes respecting the various acts of faith—apart from his identifying it with faith itself, or with faith in its own nature as distinguished from other graces—is clearly unobjectionable. Another man, entertaining simple views on the subject of faith, and throwing away the distinctions and refinements of the scholastic theology, would, in most instances, have said the same things in the same words, and in other instances similar things in somewhat different language, in describing the internal or experimental character of a Christian. A believer, even at the commencement of his spiritual life, and much more in the course of its progress, has substantially all the experiences which Dr. Ridgeley describes. Some of them, however, he possesses so slenderly that he cannot see a portraiture of them in a full-tinted description; and most of them he is unable to identify with his act of believing, or with the exercise of the specific grace of faith. If believing alone include all the hope, confidence, self-renunciation, and various emotions, and holy habits represented, he must be utterly in a difficulty to discover how he is to add to his faith the numerous graces enjoined in the divine word, all as inherent as faith itself in the character of genuine discipleship. Let us be told simply that a man who believes the gospel receives Christ, renounces self-dependence, trusts in God, and hopes to become matured in every good word and work, and we feel no perplexity; but let us be told that self-renunciation, confidence in God, living hope and other emotions, and habits of the spiritual life are faith itself—faith regarded apart from every other Christian grace, or viewed in its own peculiar and distinguishing nature—and we either lie stunned from the infliction of a blow, or dash aside the uplifted wand, and request to have the texts of scripture pointed out which warrant the representation we have heard.

But if we are liable to be perplexed by what is said respecting 'the direct acts of faith,' we may possibly—if our minds should happen to be untainted with scholasticism—regard with unmixed wonder the account which is given of 'the reflex act of faith.' This act, as Dr. Ridgeley defines it, consists in "the soul's being persuaded that it believes, or that those acts of faith which have God or Christ for their object, are true and genuine." He, in other words, who performs the reflex act of faith believes that he believes, or he has faith in his faith. Now, Dr. Ridgeley himself very

justly remarks, "that as all scripture is the rule of faith, the matter which it contains is the object of faith." [See First subdivision of the section, "The Objects and Acts of Saving Faith."] But where does scripture say, respecting any living man whatever, that he believes or is a believer? Such a proposition as "I, A. B., believe in Christ," or "Those acts of faith which I, A. B., perform, and which have God or Christ for their object, are true and genuine," is entirely beyond the record; and cannot, therefore, be a legitimate or a real object of a faith which rests entirely on the divine word. A man may believe that the blessings of redemption are divinely sufficient for him, divinely free for his acceptance, and divinely adapted to every need and capacity of his soul,—he may believe that he is in exactly the predicament to need such a Saviour as the gospel reveals, and that Christ is exactly such a Saviour as will deliver him from all his evils,—he may believe that his heart and mind and body are in just the condition to require the manifestations of the gracious character of Deity and the internal operations of the Holy Spirit described in the scriptures, and that those manifestations and operations are divinely competent to work in him both to will and to do of God's good pleasure,—and he may even believe so firmly as to be *assured* of these truths, or to enjoy as really 'the assurance of faith,' as 'the assurance of understanding,' or 'the assurance of hope,'—he may do all this, while he looks simply on the Bible, seeing there, on the one hand, direct statements as to every matter relating to the divine character and the work of redemption, and, on the other, descriptions of the conduct, moral affections, ignorance and helplessness, of those whom Christ died to save, which hold up such a mirror to his mind that he sees the reflection of his likeness, just as 'a natural man beholdeth his face in a glass;' but if he believe more,—if he so individualize his feelings and condition as to make them, distinctively and characteristically of himself, a matter of revelation,—if he set up, not the truths respecting the gracious character of God and the mediatorial work of Christ and the peculiar offices of the Holy Spirit, but a proposition respecting the genuineness of his own believing, as the object of his faith,—if he fix his belief, not on statements of the divine word respecting the class or character of beings whom Christ died to save, but on a statement of his own making respecting himself as an individual,—he goes entirely beyond the limits of what God has commanded us to believe, and runs no small hazard of losing the true comfort of an assured or strong and unwavering faith in the Redeemer, of deluding himself with the false comfort derived from resting on his own experience, and even of substituting his own acts of believing for the work of the Saviour, and building his hopes of eternal well-being, not solely and immediately upon Christ, but chiefly or altogether upon his own faith. These consequences are far, very far, from having been intended or glanced at by Dr. Ridgeley; yet they appear fairly to follow from the account he gives of the reflex act of believing.—Ed.]

ADOPTION.

QUESTION LXXIV. *What is Adoption?*

ANSWER. Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ; whereby all those that are justified, are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.

In discussing this Answer, we shall observe the following method. First, we shall consider the various senses in which persons are the sons of God; and particularly, how they are so called by adoption. Secondly, we shall show the difference between adoption as understood by men, and as it is applied in this Answer to God's taking persons into the relation of being his children; whence it will appear to be an act of his free grace. Thirdly, we shall consider the reference the sonship of believers has to the superior and more glorious Sonship of Jesus Christ, and how it is said to be for his sake. Lastly, we shall consider the privileges conferred on or reserved for those, who are the sons of God by adoption.

The Various Senses of the name 'Sons of God.'

We shall here consider, then, the various senses in which persons are called the sons of God.

1. Some are called the sons of God, as they are invested with many honours or prerogatives from God as a part of his image. Thus magistrates are called 'the children of the Most High.'^b

2. Others are called God's children, by an external federal relation, as members of the visible church. In this sense we are to understand the scripture in which

it is said, 'the sons of God saw the daughters of men,'^c &c. When Moses went in to Pharaoh to demand liberty for the Israelites, he was ordered to say, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.'^d Though this privilege, by which the church is distinguished from the world, is high and honourable; yet it is not inseparably connected with salvation. For God says concerning Israel, when revolting and backsliding from him, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'^e Many of those also who are called 'the children of the kingdom, shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'^f

3. The name 'sons of God' is sometimes taken in a more large sense, as applicable to all mankind. Thus the prophet says, 'Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?'^g And the apostle Paul, when disputing with the Athenians, speaks in their own language, and quotes a saying taken from one of their poets, which he applies to the great God, as 'giving to all life and breath, and all things;' on which account men are called 'his offspring.'^h

4. Those are called the sons of God who are endowed with his supernatural image, and admitted to the highest honours and privileges conferred upon creatures. Thus the angels are called 'the sons of God.'ⁱ

5. Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the Son of God, in a sense not applicable to any other. His Sonship includes his deity, and his having, in his human nature, received a commission from the Father, to engage in the great work of our redemption, as becoming surety for us; which is the foundation of all those saving blessings which we enjoy or hope for.

6. Believers are called the sons of God, by a special adoption. This is to be particularly considered, as it is the subject of the present Answer. Adoption is a word taken from the civil law. The practice which it denotes was much in use among the Romans in the apostles' time; in which it was a custom for persons, who had no children of their own, and were possessed of an estate, to prevent its being divided, or descending to strangers, to make choice of such as were agreeable to them and beloved by them, whom they took into the political relation of children, obliging them to take their name upon them and to pay respect to them as if they had been their natural parents, engaging to deal with them as if they had been so, and accordingly giving them a right to their estates as an inheritance. This new relation, founded in mutual consent, is a bond of affection; and the privilege arising from it is, that he who is in this sense a father, takes care of and provides for the person whom he adopts, as if he were his son by nature. Hence, civilians call adoption an act of legitimation, imitating nature, or supplying the place of it.

The Difference between Divine and Human Adoption.

We are now led to consider the difference between adoption as understood by men, and as it is applied in this Answer to God's taking persons into the relation of being his children.

1. When men adopt persons, or take them into the relation of children, they do it because they are destitute of children of their own to possess their estates, and so fix their love on strangers. But God was under no obligation to do this; for if he designed to manifest his glory to any creatures, the holy angels were subjects capable of receiving the displays of it; and his own Son, who had all the perfections of the divine nature, was infinitely the object of his delight, and in all respects fitted to be as he is styled, 'the heir of all things.'^k

2. When men adopt, they are generally inclined to do it by seeing some excellency or amiableness in the persons whom they fix their love upon. Thus Pharaoh's daughter took up Moses, and nourished him as her own son, because he was 'exceeding fair.'^l Or it may be, she was moved by a natural compassion she had for him, besides the motive of his beauty; as it is said, 'the babe wept, and she had compassion on him.'^m Mordecai also adopted Esther, or took her as his own

c Gen. vi. 2.
g Mal. ii. 10.
k Heb. i. 2.

d Exod. iv. 22.
h Acts xvii. 25; compared with 28.
l Acts vii. 20, 21.

e Isa. i. 2.
f Matt. viii. 12.
i Job xxxviii. 7.
m Exod. ii. 6.

daughter, 'for she was his uncle's daughter, and was fair and beautiful,' and an orphan, 'having neither father nor mother.'ⁿ But when God takes any into the relation of children, they have no beauty or comeliness, and might justly have been for ever the object of his abhorrence. Thus he says concerning the church of Israel, when he first took them into this relation, 'None eye pitied thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live,'^o &c. It might indeed be said concerning man, when admitted to this favour and privilege, that he was miserable; but misery, how much soever it may render the soul an object of pity, cannot, properly speaking, be said to be a motive or inducement whence the divine compassion took its rise. This appears from the account we have of the mercy of God, as founded only on his sovereign will or pleasure, as he says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion';^p and also from the consideration of man's being exposed to misery by sin, which rendered him an object rather of vindictive justice than of mercy. His misery, therefore, cannot be the ground of God's giving him a right to an inheritance. Hence, adoption is truly said, in this Answer, to be an act of the free grace of God.

3. When men adopt, their taking persons into the relation of children, is not necessarily attended with any change of disposition or temper in the persons adopted. A person may be admitted to this privilege, and yet remain the same, in that respect, as he was before. But when God takes his people into the relation of children, he gives them not only those other privileges which arise thence, but also that temper and disposition which becomes those who are thus related to him.

The Reference of the Sonship of Believers to the Sonship of Christ.

We are next to consider the reference which the sonship of believers has to the superior and more glorious Sonship of Jesus Christ; and how it is said to be for his sake. Here we must suppose that there is a sense in which Christ is said to be the Son of God, as the result of the divine decree. This contains an idea very distinct from his being a divine person. For that was not the result of the will of the Father; whereas it is said concerning him, 'I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.'^q Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than' the angels; and this is represented as the consequence of God's saying to him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' and 'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son';^r which plainly refers to Christ as Mediator.^s Now, when we consider this mediatorial Sonship of Christ, if I may so express it, we are far from asserting that Christ's Sonship and that of believers is of the same kind; for, as much as he exceeds them as Mediator, as to the glory of his person and office, so much is his Sonship superior to theirs.

This being premised, we may now better understand the reference which the sonship of believers has to Christ's being the Son of God as Mediator. Let it be considered, then, that it is a prerogative and glory of Christ as the Son of God, that he has all things which relate to the salvation of his elect put into his hand. Hence, whatever the saints enjoy or hope for, which is sometimes called in scripture their inheritance, agreeably to their character as the children of God by adoption, is considered as first purchased by Christ and then put into his hand. On this account it is styled his inheritance; he being, pursuant to his having accomplished the work of redemption, constituted heir of all things; and as such, not only having a right to his people, but being put in possession of all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places, wherewith they are 'blessed in him.'^t It hence follows that the sonship of believers, and their right to that inheritance which God has reserved for them, depends upon the sonship of Christ, which is infinitely more

ⁿ Esther ii. 7. ^o Ezek. xvi. 5. ^p Rom. ix. 15. ^q Psal. ii. 7. ^r Heb. i. 4, 5.

^s [For an examination of the views which Dr. Ridgeley here and elsewhere expresses of our Lord's Sonship, See Note 'The Sonship of Christ,' under Quest. ix, x, xi.—ED.]

^t Eub. i. 3.

glorious and excellent. As God's adopted sons, they have the honour conferred upon them of being 'made kings and priests' to him.^u These honours are conferred by Christ; and, in order to their being so, they are first given to him to bestow upon them. Thus he says, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.'^x Christ is first appointed heir of all things as Mediator; and then his people, or his children, are considered as 'heirs of God,' as the apostle expresses it, 'and joint-heirs with Christ.'^y Not that they have any share in his personal or mediatorial glory; but when they are styled 'joint-heirs' with him, we must consider them as having a right to that inheritance which he is possessed of in their name as Mediator. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures which speak of God being first the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then, in him, our Father. Thus Christ says, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'^z Elsewhere God is styled 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and then 'the Father of mercies,' or our merciful Father.^a Again, the apostle says, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself.'^b And inasmuch as he designed to 'bring many sons to glory,' they being 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' he first 'made the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'^c In this respect, our right to the inheritance of children is founded in the eternal purpose of God relating to that right, and in the purchase of Christ as having obtained this inheritance for us.

The Privileges of Adoption.

We are now to consider the privileges conferred on or reserved for those who are the sons of God by adoption. These are summed up in a very comprehensive expression which contains an amazing display of divine grace: 'He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'^d It is a very large grant which God is pleased to make to them: 'they shall inherit all things.' God is not ashamed to be called their God; and in having him, they are said to possess all things, which are eminently and transcendently in him. They have a right to all the blessings which he had designed for them, and which have a tendency to make them completely happy. In this sense we are to understand our Saviour's words in the parable: 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'^e Nothing greater than this can be desired or enjoyed by creatures whom the Lord delights to honour. Let us, however, be a little more particular in considering the privileges which God confers on or has reserved for his children.

1. They are all emancipated, or freed from the slavery which they were before under either to sin or Satan. They who were once 'the servants of sin,' are, by adoption, 'made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness,' or become 'servants to God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'^f 'The Son makes them free;' and therefore, 'they are free indeed.'^g They are described as having formerly 'served divers lusts and pleasures;'^h and are said to have been 'of their father, the devil,' and to 'have done his works,' or followed his suggestions,ⁱ ensnared and 'taken captive by him at his will;'^k and, in consequence, they were in perpetual bondage, arising from a dread of the wrath of God, and from a 'fear of death' impressed on their spirits by him who is said to have 'the power of death.'^l But they have now deliverance from these evils; which cannot but be reckoned a glorious privilege.

2. They have God's name put upon them, and accordingly are described as 'his people, called by his name.'^m This is an high and honourable character, denoting their relation to him as a peculiar people; and it belongs to them alone. Thus the church says, 'We are thine; thou never bearest rule over them,'ⁿ namely,

u Rev. i. 6.

a 2 Cor. i. 3.

d Rev. xxi. 7.

i John viii. 44.

n Isa. lxiii. 19.

x Luke xxii. 29.

b Eph. i. 3. compared with 5.

e Luke xv. 31.

k 2 Tim. ii. 26.

y Rom. viii. 17.

c Heb. ii. 10. compared with Col. i. 12.

f Rom. vi. 17, 18, 22.

l Heb. ii. 14, 15.

g John viii. 36.

z John xx. 17.

h Tit. iii. 3.

m 2 Chron. vii. 14.

thine adversaries; 'they were not called by thy name.' God's adopted children have also Christ's name put on them. 'Of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named.'^o This signifies not only that propriety which he has in them as Mediator, but their relation to him as the ransomed of the Lord,—his sheep, whom he leads and feeds like a shepherd. They are also styled his children, when he says, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.'^p Indeed, when he is called a surety, or an advocate, or is said to execute certain offices as a Saviour or Redeemer, these are all relative terms; and whatever he does in the capacities which they denote is in the name of his people, and for their advantage. Accordingly, it is said, 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'^q

3. They are taken into God's family, and dealt with as members of it; and accordingly are styled 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.'^r As the consequence of this, they have protection, provision, and communion with him. First, they have safe protection. As the master of a family thinks himself obliged to secure and defend from danger all who are under his roof, whose house is, as it were, their castle; so Christ is his people's defence. Accordingly, it is said concerning him, 'A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'^s As the consequence of this, it is added, 'My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.'^t 'They dwell on high; their place of defence is the munition of rocks.'^u He who has subdued their enemies, and will, in his own time, bruise them under their feet, will take care that they shall not meet with that disturbance from them which may hinder their repose or rest in him, or render their state unsafe, so as to endanger their perishing or falling from it.—Again, they enjoy the plentiful provisions of God's house. Hence, Christ is called their 'shepherd,'^x not only as leading and defending them, but as providing for them. 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.'^y As all grace is treasured up in him, and there is a fulness of it which he has to impart to the heirs of salvation which is sufficient to supply all their wants; so they shall never have reason to complain that they are straitened in him. The blessings of his house are not only exhilarating but satisfying, and such as have a tendency to make them completely happy.—Further, they are admitted to the greatest intimacy with Christ, and have sweet communion with him: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.'^z He deals with them as with 'friends:' particularly, as he tells his disciples, in that 'all that he has heard of the Father,'^a that is, whatever he had a commission to impart for their direction or comfort, he 'makes known unto them;' which must needs be reckoned a very great privilege. If the queen of Sheba, when beholding the advantages which they who were in Solomon's presence enjoyed, could not but with an ecstasy of admiration say, 'Happy are thy men; happy are thy servants, which stand continually before thee, that hear thy wisdom;'^b much more may they be said to be happy who are admitted into his presence in whom 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'^c

4. Another privilege which they enjoy, is access to God, as a reconciled Father, through Christ. They have liberty to 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'^d—Whatever their straits and difficulties are, God holds forth his golden sceptre, invites them to come to him, asks, 'What is thy petition?' and gives them ground to hope that it shall be granted, so far as it may redound to his glory and their good. And inasmuch as they are often straitened in their spirits, and unprepared to draw nigh to him, they have the promise of the Spirit to assist them; on which account he is called 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.'^e This privilege is said to be a consequence of their being sons: 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'^f By this means they have

o Eph. iii. 15.
s Isa. xxxiii. 2.
y Isa. xl. 11.
c Col. ii. 3.

p Heb. ii. 13.
t Ver. 18.
z Psal. xxv. 14.
d Heb. iv. 16.

q 1 Cor. i. 31
u Chap. xxxiii. 16.
a John xv. 15.
e Rom. viii. 15.

r Eph. ii. 19.
x Psal. xxiii. 1.
b 1 Kings x. 8.
f Gal. iv. 6.

becoming conceptions of the Divine Majesty, a reverential fear of him, a love to him, earnest desires of communion with him, and of being made partakers of what he has to impart. They have a right to plead the promises; and in so doing, are encouraged to hope for the blessings they contain.

5. As God's children are prone to backslide from him, and so have need of restoring grace, he will recover and humble them, and thereby prevent their total apostasy. This he sometimes does by afflictions, which the apostle calls fatherly chastisements, and which he reckons not only consistent with his love, but evidences of it. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;' and 'if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.'^g The apostle speaks here, of afflictions, not as considered absolutely in themselves, but as proceeding from the love of God, as designed to do them good, and as adapted to the present state, in which they are training up for the glorious inheritance reserved for them in heaven, and need some trying dispensations which may put them in mind of that state of perfect blessedness which is laid up for them. These afflictions are rendered subservient to their present and future advantage. In the present life, they 'bring forth the peaceful fruits of righteousness' to them; and when they are in the end perfectly freed from them, they will tend to enhance their joy and praise. This leads us to consider another privilege, which is so great that it crowns all those they are now possessed of.

6. They shall, at last, be brought into God's immediate presence, and satisfied with his likeness. The apostle, speaking of the perfect blessedness of the saints, when raised from the dead, and delivered from the bondage of corruption, and made partakers of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, calls it by way of eminence, 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies.' This signifies, not only the full manifestation of their adoption, but their taking possession of their inheritance, which they are now waiting and hoping for, and which is too great for the heart of man to conceive of in this present state. 'Now,' says the apostle, 'are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'^h Hence, all the blessings which we have either in hand or in hope, the blessings of both worlds, the blessings which are conferred upon us from our conversion to our glorification, are the privileges which God bestows on those who are his adopted children.

The Connection between Adoption and Justification.

From what has been said concerning adoption, we may take occasion to observe how, in some respects, it agrees with justification, or may indeed be reckoned a branch of it, and, in other respects, includes something which is an ingredient in sanctification. We formerly observed, when treating of justification, that, when God forgives sin, he confers on his people a right to life, or to all the blessings of the covenant of grace, in which are contained the promises which belong to the life that now is, and that which is to come. These are the privileges which God's adopted children are made partakers of; and in this respect some divines suppose that adoption is included in our justification.ⁱ

If justification be explained as denoting an immanent act in God, whereby the elect are considered, in the covenant between the Father and the Son, as in Christ their federal head; they are then considered as the adopted children of God in Christ. Accordingly, when described as chosen in Christ unto eternal life, they are said to be 'predestinated unto the adoption of children';^k which is a privilege to be obtained by Jesus Christ. In this respect all the elect are called Christ's 'seed that shall serve him,'^l whom he had a special regard to, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and concerning whom he had the promise made to him in the covenant which passed between the Father and him, that 'he should see them, and the pleasure of the Lord,' with respect to their everlasting salvation, 'should prosper in his hand.'^m Now, when Christ is considered as the head of the elect, who

^g Heb. xii. 6, 8, 11.
^k Eph. i. 5.

^h 1 John iii. 2.
^l Psal. xxii. 30.

ⁱ Vid. Turret. Theol. Elenct. Tom. 2. Loc. 16. § 7.
^m Isa. liii. 10.

are in this sense called his sons whom he has engaged to bring to glory, faith is the fruit and consequence of adoption. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'ⁿ

But as justification is a declared act, and is said to be by faith; so adoption, agreeing with it, is of the same nature. Accordingly we are said to be the 'children of God by faith;'^o that is, it is by faith that we have a right to claim the relation of children, together with the privileges which are the result of it.

Moreover, as adoption includes a person's being made meet for the inheritance which God has reserved for him, and his being endowed with the temper and disposition of his children, consisting in humility, heavenly-mindedness, love to him, dependence upon him, a zeal for his glory, a likeness to Christ, a having in some measure the same mind in us which was in him, it in this respect agrees with sanctification,—which is what we are next to consider.

SANCTIFICATION.

QUESTION LXXV. *What is sanctification?*

ANSWER. Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man, after the image of God, having the seeds of repentance unto life, and of all other saving graces, put into their hearts; and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

The meaning of the word 'Sanctify.'

WE shall show what we are to understand by the word 'sanctify.' Sanctifying is sometimes considered as what has God for its object. Thus he is said to 'sanctify himself,' when he appears in the glory of his holiness, and gives occasion to the world to adore that perfection. This he is sometimes represented as doing, when he punishes sin in a visible and exemplary manner. Thus, when God threatens to call for 'a sword,' and to 'plead against' a rebellious people 'with pestilence and with blood,' he is said, by this means, to 'magnify and sanctify himself,' so as to be 'known,' that is, as a holy God, 'in the eyes of many nations.' Likewise, when he fulfils his promises, and thereby advances his holiness, as when he brought his people out of captivity, and gathered them out of the countries in which they had been scattered, he is said to be 'sanctified in them.'^p And he is sanctified by his people, when they give him the glory which is due to his holiness, as thus displayed and magnified by him. Thus, God's people are said to 'sanctify the Lord of hosts,' when they make him the object of their 'fear and of their dread.'^q

This, however, is not the sense in which we are here to understand the word 'sanctify.' But we are to consider it as applied to men. In this respect it is taken in various senses. Sometimes it is used to denote their consecration or separation to God. Thus, our Saviour says, when devoting and applying himself to the work for which he came into the world, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.'^r But this is not the sense in which it is to be understood in this Answer. Moreover, it is often taken in scripture for persons being devoted to God to minister in holy things. Thus, Aaron and his sons were 'sanctified, that they might minister unto him in the priest's office.'^s It is sometimes taken also for an external federal dedication to God, to walk before him as a peculiar people in observance of his holy institutions. Thus, when Israel consented to be God's people, they are styled, 'holiness unto the Lord,'^t 'the holy seed,'^u and 'a holy nation.'^x And the church under the gospel-dispensation, as consecrated and professing subjection to Christ,

ⁿ Gal. iv. 6.

^r John xvii. 19.

^o Chap. iii. 26.

^s Exod. xxviii. 41.

^p Ezek. xxxviii. 21—23.

^t Jer. ii. 3.

^u Ezra ix. 2.

^q Isa. viii. 13.

^x 1 Pet. ii. 9.

or as separated to his service and waiting for his presence while engaged in all those ordinances which he has appointed in the gospel, is described as 'called to be saints';^y and, as thus sanctified, they are related to him in an external and visible way. Neither is this, however, the sense in which the word is understood in this Answer.

We are here to understand sanctification as a special discriminating grace, whereby persons are, not externally only, but really devoted to Christ by faith. It is the internal beauty of the soul; whereby all the faculties being renewed, and a powerful effectual change wrought in them, they are enabled to turn from sin unto God, and exercise all those graces by which they 'walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their lives,'^z till this work, which is gradually carried on here, shall be brought to perfection hereafter.

What Sanctification includes.

Sanctification, as described in this Answer, may be considered as including several graces which have been already insisted on, namely, regeneration, effectual calling, and faith. There is also another grace connected with it, which will be particularly insisted on under the next Answer, namely, repentance unto life. All these graces are said to be wrought by the powerful operation of the Spirit in those who were, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy. Regeneration is styled by some 'initial sanctification,' as all graces take their rise from the principle which is therein implanted. Effectual calling, or conversion, is that whereby we are brought into the way of holiness, and internally disposed to walk in it. Faith is that grace whereby this work is promoted; as all holy actions proceed from it, as deriving strength from Christ to perform them. Repentance is that whereby the work of sanctification discovers itself in the soul's abhorring and fleeing from everything which tends to defile it, and approves itself to God as one who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without the greatest detestation. But as these graces either have been or will be particularly insisted on in their proper place, we shall more especially consider sanctification as a progressive work. As such it is distinguished from them; and, as the subject of it, we daily consecrate or devote ourselves to God, our actions have all a tendency to advance his glory, and, by the Spirit, we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. It is therefore not merely one act of grace, but includes the whole progress of the work of grace, as gradually carried on till perfected in glory. This is what we are particularly to consider.

I. Sanctification includes a continual devotedness to God. As the first act of faith consists in making a surrender of ourselves to Christ, depending on his assistance in beginning the work of obedience in the exercise of all Christian graces; so sanctification is the continuance of this surrender and dependence. When we are converted, we receive Christ Jesus the Lord; and in sanctification we walk in him, exercise a daily dependence on him in the execution of all his offices, make his word our rule, and delight in it after the inward man. How difficult soever the duties are which he commands, we take pleasure in the performance of them, make religion our great business, and, in order to this, conclude that every thing we receive from him is to be improved to his glory. And as every duty is to be performed by faith; so what was formerly observed concerning the life of faith, is to be considered as an expedient to promote the work of sanctification.

II. In the carrying on of the work of sanctification, we are to endeavour, to our utmost, to guard against the prevailing power of sin, by all those methods which are prescribed in the gospel; that so it may not have dominion over us. This is generally styled the work of mortification. The apostle speaks of 'our old man being crucified with Christ, and the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;'^a of our 'crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts;' and of our 'mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit,'^b—that is, by his assistance and grace, which is necessary to our success.^c This is a very difficult work, espe-

y Rom. i. 7.

z Luke i. 75.

a Rom. vi. 6.

b Gal. v. 24.

c Rom. viii. 13.

cially considering the prevalence of corruption,—the multitude of temptations to which we are exposed,—the subtilty and watchfulness of Satan, who walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,—the treachery of our own hearts, which are so prone to depart from God,—the fickleness and instability of our resolutions,—the irregularity of our affections, and the constant efforts made by corrupt nature to gain the ascendancy over them, and turn them aside from God. Corrupt nature sometimes gains the ascendancy by presenting things in a false view, calling evil good, and good evil; representing some things as harmless and not displeasing to God, which are most pernicious and offensive; endeavouring to lead us into mistakes as to the matter of sin or duty, and to persuade us that those things will issue well which are likely to prove bitterness in the end; and attempting to make us believe that we are in a right and safe way, when in reality we are walking contrary to God, and corrupt nature is gaining strength. This, however, will be farther considered, when we speak concerning the imperfection of sanctification in believers.^d Now, the difficulties which we have stated render it necessary for us to make use of those methods which God has prescribed for the mortification of sin.

1. We must endeavour to maintain a constant sense of the heinous nature of sin, as it is contrary to the holiness of God, a stain which cannot be washed away but by the blood of Jesus, the highest display of ingratitude for all the benefits which we have received, a bitter and an only evil, the abominable thing that God hates. It is to be considered not only as condemning, but as defiling; that, by so considering it, we may maintain a constant abhorrence of it,—and that not only of those sins which expose us to scorn and reproach in the eye of the world, but of every thing which is in itself sinful, as contrary to the law of God.

2. We must be watchful against the breakings forth of corrupt nature; observe the frame and disposition of our spirits, and the deceitfulness of sin, which has a tendency to harden us; and avoid all occasions of or incentives to it, ‘hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,’^e ‘abstaining from all appearance of evil.’^f We may add, that we are frequently to examine ourselves with respect to our behaviour in every state of life; whether sin be gaining or losing ground in us; whether we make conscience of performing every duty, both personal and relative; what guilt we contract by sins of omission, or the want of that fervency of spirit which has a tendency to beget a formal, dead, and stupid frame and temper of mind, and thereby hinder the progress of the work of sanctification. But that which is the principal if not the only expedient which will prove effectual for the mortifying of sin, is our seeking help against it from him who is able to give us the victory over it.

3. Whatever attempts we use against the prevailing power of sin, in order to the mortifying of it, must be performed by faith; seeking and deriving that help from Christ which is necessary to our success. Hence, as the dominion of sin consists in its rendering us guilty in the sight of God, so that the conscience is burdened by reason of the dread which it has of the punishment which is due to us, and of the condemning sentence of the law to which we are liable; and as its mortification, in this respect, consists in our deliverance from that which makes us so uneasy; no expedient can be used to mortify it, but our looking by faith to Christ as a propitiation for sin, whereby we are enabled to behold the debt which we had contracted cancelled, the indictment superseded, and the condemning sentence repealed, whence the soul concludes that iniquity shall not be its ruin. This is the only method we are to take when oppressed with a sense of the guilt of sin, which is daily committed by us. It was shadowed forth by the Israelites looking to the brazen serpent, a type of Christ crucified, when they were stung with fiery serpents, which occasioned exquisite pain, and would, without this expedient, have brought immediate death. Thus the deadly wound of sin is healed by the sovereign balm of Christ’s blood applied by faith; and we, by his having fulfilled the law, may be said to be dead to it, as freed from its curse and from all the sad consequences which would follow.

Again, sin is said to have dominion over us, in all the powers and faculties of

d See Quest. lxxviii.

e Jude 23.

f 2 Thess. v. 22.

our souls being enslaved by it, whereby, as the apostle expresses it, 'we are carnal, sold under sin ;'^g in our being weak and unable to perform what is good ; and in the corruption of nature being so predominant, that we are, as it were, carried down the stream, which we strive against, but in vain. Now, in this respect, sin is to be mortified by a fiducial application to Christ for help against it. We are to consider him as having undertaken to deliver not only from the condemning, but from the prevailing power of sin. His delivering us from this is a part of the work which he is now engaged in ; wherein he applies the redemption he purchased, by the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, and the soul seeks to him for them. As it is natural for us, when we are in imminent danger of present ruin, or are assaulted by an enemy whose superior force we are not able to withstand, to cry out to some kind friend for help ; or when we are in danger of death, by some disease which nature is ready to sink under, to apply ourselves to the physician for relief ; so the believer is to apply to Christ for strength against the prevailing power of indwelling sin, and for grace to make him more than a conqueror over it ; and Christ, by his Spirit, enables us, as the apostle says, 'to mortify the deeds of the body.'^h In order to our thus applying to Christ, we take encouragement from the promises of God, and from the connection which there is between Christ's having made satisfaction for sin, and his delivering his redeemed people from the power of it. The apostle says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law,' that is, under the condemning sentence of it, 'but under grace,'ⁱ as having an interest in that grace which has engaged to deliver from sin. In both these respects, we consider Christ, not only as able, but as having undertaken, to deliver his people from all their spiritual enemies, to relieve them in all their straits and exigencies, and to bring them off safe and victorious. This is the method which we are to take to mortify sin ; and it is a never-failing remedy. What was observed under the foregoing Heads, concerning our endeavouring to see the evil of sin, and exercising watchfulness against the occasions of it, are necessary duties, without which sin will gain strength. The victory over it, however, is principally owing to our deriving righteousness and strength, by faith, from Christ ; whereby he has the glory of a conqueror over it, and we have the advantage of receiving this privilege as applying ourselves to him, and relying upon him, for it.

Having considered the way in which sin is to be mortified agreeably to the gospel-rule, we shall, before we close this Head, take notice of some other methods which many rest in, thinking thereby to free themselves from the dominion of sin, which will not answer that end. Some, who do not duly consider the spirituality of the law of God, have no other notion of sin than as it discovers itself in those gross enormities which are matter of public scandal or reproach in the eye of the world. Such sentiments of moral evil the apostle Paul had before his conversion ; he says, 'I was alive without the law once ;'^k and, 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' 'Sin' did not 'appear to be sin ;'^l that is, nothing was thought sin by him but that which was openly scandalous, and deemed so by universal consent. He hence says elsewhere, that 'touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless.'^m Ephraim also is represented as saying, 'In all my labour they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.'ⁿ Persons of the class to which we refer think they shall come off well, if they can say that they are not guilty of some enormous crimes ; so that none can charge them with those open debaucheries or other sins which are not to be mentioned among Christians. Or if, through any change in their condition of life, or by being delivered from those temptations which gave occasion to them, or by their natural temper being less inclined to them than before, they abstain from such crimes, they call their abstinence a mortifying of sin ; though the most that can be said of it is, that sin is only curbed or confined, and their natural inclinations to it abated, while it is far from being dead. Others who will allow that sin is of a far larger extent, and includes that which prevails in the heart, as well as that which renders itself visible in the life, and contains the omission of duties, as well as the actual commission

^g Rom. vii. 14.
compared with 7.

^h Chap. viii. 13.
^l Verse 13.

ⁱ Chap. vi. 14.
^m in Phil. iii. 6.

^k Chap. vii. 9.
ⁿ Hos. xii. 8.

of known sins, often take a preposterous method to mortify it. If they are sensible of the guilt which is contracted, they use no other method to be discharged from it, but to pretend to make atonement, either by confessing their sins, by using endeavours to abstain from them, or by the performance of some duties of religion by which they think to make God amends for the injuries they have offered to him. This, however, is so far from mortifying sin, that it increases its guilt, and causes it to take deeper root, and afterwards to break forth in a greater degree; or it tends to stupify the conscience, so that they afterwards go on in the way of sin, with carnal security, and without remorse. Others think, that to mortify sin, is nothing else but to subdue and keep under their passions, at least to such a degree that they may not, through the irregularity and impetuous violence of them, commit those sins which they cannot but reflect upon with shame when brought into a more calm and considerate temper of mind. In order to this, they subject themselves to certain rules, which the light of nature will suggest, and the wiser heathen have laid down, to induce persons to lead a virtuous life. They argue with themselves, that it is below the dignity of human nature for men to suffer their passions to lead their reason captive, or to do that which betrays a want of wisdom as well as temper. If by this means the exorbitancy of their passions is abated, and many sins which it occasions are prevented, they conclude their lives to be unblemished, and sin subdued. Yet all they do is nothing but a restraining of the fury of their temper, or the giving of a check to some sins, while sin in general remains unmortified.

As to the methods prescribed by some Popish casuists, of emaciating the body, or keeping it under by physic or a sparing diet, and submitting to hard penances, not only to atone for past sins, but to prevent them for the future; these have not a tendency to strike at the root of sin, and therefore are unjustly called a mortifying of it. For though an abstemious regular way of living is conducive to some valuable ends, and though without it, men are led to the commission of many sins; yet it is no expedient to take away guilt, nor does it sufficiently subdue the enslaving, captivating, and prevailing power of indwelling sin, which discovers itself in various shapes, and attends every condition and circumstance of life. Equally useless are those common methods which many others take, and which are of a different nature. When persons resolve, though in their own strength, to break off their sins by repentance, or when they endeavour to strengthen their resolutions to lead a virtuous life, when these are weak and not much regarded by them, their efforts will not answer the designed end. Sin will be too strong for all their resolutions; and the engagements with which they bind themselves will be but like the cords with which Sampson was bound, which were broken by him like threads. If we rely on our own strength, how much soever we may be resolved to abstain from sin at present, God will make us sensible of our weakness by leaving us to ourselves; and then how much soever we resolve to abstain from sin, it will appear that it is far from being mortified or subdued by us. We conclude, therefore, that mortification of sin cannot be performed, but by going forth in the name and strength of Christ, who is able to keep us from falling, or, when fallen, to recover us. This will be found in the end to be the best expedient for promoting this branch of our sanctification.

III. In carrying on the work of sanctification, we are enabled to walk with God, or before him, in holiness and righteousness. We are first made alive in regeneration; and then we put forth living actions. The experience of this some call vivification, as distinguished from that part of sanctification which has been already considered, namely, mortification of sin. This is what we may call leading an holy life; and we are to understand by it much more than many do. They suppose that it consists only in the performance of some moral duties which contain the external part of religion, without which there would not be the least shadow of holiness; in performing those duties which we owe to men in the various relations which we stand in to them; or, at least, in keeping ourselves clear of those 'pollutions which are in the world through lust.'^o The Pharisee, in the gospel, thought himself an extraordinarily holy person, because he was no extortioner, nor unjust, nor adulterer, but fasted, paid tithes, and performed several works of charity.

Many also are great pretenders to holiness, who have no other than a form of godliness without the power of it, or who are more than ordinarily diligent in their attendance on the ordinances of God's appointment, though they are far from giving that attendance in a right way, and are like those whom the prophet speaks of, who are said to 'seek God daily, and to delight to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God,' though at the same time, they are said to 'fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.'^p

That we may consider several other things which are contained in a person's leading an holy life, let it be observed that our natures must be changed. Sanctification always supposes and flows from regeneration. There must be grace in the heart, else it can never discover itself in the life. The root must be good, else the tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The spring of action must be cleansed, otherwise the actions themselves will be impure. Some persons, who are generally strangers to the internal work of grace, are very apt to insist much on the goodness of their hearts; and they sometimes plead this in excuse for the badness of their lives; while, in reality, they never had a due sense of the plague and perverseness of their own hearts. Good actions must proceed from a good principle, otherwise persons are in an unsanctified state. And, as these actions must be conformable to the rule laid down in the word of God, and performed in a right manner, and to the glory of God as the end designed by them; so they must be performed by faith, whereby we, being sensible of our own weakness and unworthiness, depend on Christ for assistance and acceptance. This exercise of faith and dependence must be our constant work and business; whereby we are said to walk with God, as well as to live to him.

Again, in order to our leading a holy life, we must make use of those motives and inducements which are contained in the gospel. In particular, we are to have in our view that perfect pattern of holiness which Christ has given us. He has 'left us an example that we should follow his steps.'^q Whatever we find in the life of Christ, prescribed for our imitation, should be improved to promote the work of sanctification. His humility, meekness, patience, submission to the divine will, his zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind, and his unfainting perseverance in pursuing the end for which he came into the world, are all mentioned in scripture, not merely that we should yield an assent to the account we have of them in the gospel-history, but that 'the same mind should be in us, which was also in him.'^r 'He,' says the apostle, 'that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.'^s We may add, that we ought to set before us the example of others, and be followers of them so far as they followed him. Their example, indeed, is as much inferior to Christ's, as imperfect holiness is to that which is perfect; yet it is an encouragement to us, that, in following the footsteps of the flock, we have many bright examples of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.—Another motive to holiness is the love of Christ, expressed in the great work of our redemption, and in that care and compassion which he has extended towards us in the application of it, in all the methods he has used in beginning and carrying on the work of grace; in regard to which we may say, 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.' The love of Christ ought to be improved so as to 'constrain us,'^t as he has hereby laid us under the highest obligation to live to him. And as love to Christ is the main ingredient in sanctification; so when by faith we behold him as the most engaging and desirable object, it will afford a constant inducement to holiness.—Another motive to holiness, is our relation to God as his children, and our professed subjection to him. As we gave up ourselves to him when first we believed, avouched him to be our God, and, since then, have experienced many instances of his condescending goodness and faithfulness; as he has been pleased to grant us some degrees of communion with him, through Christ; as he has given us many great and precious promises, and, in various instances, made them good to us; and as he has reserved an inheritance for all that are sanctified, in that better world to which they shall at last be brought; so, on all these grounds, we should be induced to lead a life of holiness. 'Having

these promises,' says the apostle, 'let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'^u

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Sanctification.

1. From what has been said in explaining the doctrine of sanctification, we may infer the difference that there is between moral virtue, so far as it may be attained by the light of nature and the improvement of human reason, and that holiness of heart and life which includes all Christian virtues, and is inseparably connected with salvation. All who are conversant with the writings of the heathen moralists will find in some of them a great many things which tend to regulate the conduct of life, and precepts laid down which, if followed, bear a great resemblance to the grace of sanctification. In this matter, some who have been destitute of the light of the gospel have very much excelled many who bear the Christian name. When we find a lively representation of the universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature, the disorder and irregularity of the affections, and man's natural propensity to vice; rules laid down for the attaining of virtue, by means of which men are directed how to free themselves from that slavery which they are under to their lusts; and advice given to press after a resemblance and conformity to God; these things carry in them a great show of holiness. A late writer^x has collected several passages out of their writings with a design to prove that, though they were destitute of gospel-light, yet they might attain salvation; inasmuch as they use many expressions which very much resemble the grace of sanctification. One of them, for example, speaking concerning contentment in the station of life in which providence had fixed him, says, "A servant of God should not be solicitous for the morrow. Can any good man fear that he should want food? Doth God so neglect his servants, and his witnesses, as that they should be destitute of his care and providence?" And he adds, "Did I ever, Lord, accuse thee, or complain of thy government? Was I not always willing to be sick when it was thy pleasure that I should be so? Did I ever desire to be what thou wouldst not have me to be? Am I not always ready to do what thou commandest? Wilt thou have me to continue here? I will freely do as thou wilt. Or, wouldst thou have me depart hence? I will freely do it at thy command. I have always had my will subject to that of God. Deal with me according to thy pleasure. I am always of the same mind with thee. I refuse nothing which thou art pleased to lay upon me. Lead me whither thou wilt; clothe me as thou pleasest. I will be a magistrate, or private person; continue me in my country, or in exile; I will not only submit to but defend thy proceedings in all things." We might also produce quotations out of other writings, whereby it appears that some of the heathen excelled many Christians in the consistency of their sentiments about religious matters with the divine perfections; as when they say, "Whatever endowment of the mind has a tendency to make a man truly great and excellent, is owing to an internal divine influence."^y Others, speaking of the natural propensity which there is in mankind to vice, maintained that, to guard against it, there is a necessity of their having assistance from God in order to their leading a virtuous life; and that virtue is not attained by instruction, that is, not only by that means, but that it is from God, and is to be sought for at his hands by faith and prayer. Much to this purpose may be seen in the writings of Plato, Maximus Tyrius, Hierocles, and several others.^z

The principal use which I would make of the fact I have been illustrating, is to observe that it should humble many Christians, who are far from coming up to the Heathen in the practice of moral virtue. As for the sentiments of those who deny the necessity of our having divine influence in order to our performing in a right manner the duties which God requires of us, they fall very short of what the light

^u 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^x See Whitby's Dis. &c., page 541, in which he quotes Arrian, as giving the sense of Epictetus, lib. i. cap. 9. lib. iii. cap. 5, 24, 26, 36, &c.

^y Vid. Cic. de naturâ Deorum, lib. ii. 'Nullus unquam vir magnus fuit, sine aliquo afflatu divino.'

^z See Gale's Court of the Gentiles, book iii. chap. i. and chap. x. and Wits. de Œcon. Fæd. pages 461—463.

of nature has suggested to those who have duly attended to it, though destitute of divine revelation. When I meet with such expressions as I have quoted, and many other divine things, in the writings of Plato, and what he says of the conversation of his master Socrates, both in his life and at his death, I cannot but apply in this case what our Saviour says to the Scribe in the gospel who answered him discreetly, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'^a These things, it is true, very much resemble the grace of sanctification; yet, in many respects, they fall short of it; inasmuch as those who maintained them had no acts of faith in a Mediator, whom they were altogether strangers to, being destitute of divine revelation. It is not my design, at present, to inquire whether they had any hope of salvation, this subject having been considered under a former Answer.^b All that I shall here observe is, that some of the best of them were charged with notorious crimes, which a Christian would hardly reckon consistent with the truth of grace. Plato was charged with flattering tyrants, and too much indulging pride and luxury;^c Socrates, with pleading for fornication and incest, and practising sodomy; if what some have reported concerning them be true.^d But, without laying any stress on the character of particular persons, who, in other respects, have said and done many excellent things; it is evident, that whatever appearance of holiness there may be in the writings or conversation of those who are strangers to Christ and his gospel, falls short of the grace of sanctification. There is a vast difference between recommending or practising moral virtues, as agreeable to the nature of man, and the dictates of reason; and a person's being led in that way of holiness which our Saviour has prescribed in the gospel. This takes its rise from a change of nature wrought in regeneration, is excited by gospel-motives, is encouraged by promises of holy attainments, and proceeds from the grace of faith, without which all pretensions to holiness are vain and defective. What advances soever the heathen moralists may have made, in endeavouring to free themselves from the slavery of sin, they were very deficient as to its mortification. Being ignorant of that great atonement which is made by Christ, as the only expedient to take away the guilt of sin, they could not by any method attain a conscience void of offence, or any degree of hope concerning the forgiveness of sin, and the way of acceptance in the sight of God. Moreover, their using endeavours to stop the current of vice, and to subdue their inordinate affections, could not be effectual to answer that end, inasmuch as they were destitute of the Spirit of God, who affords his divine assistance in order to the attainment of it, in no other way than what is prescribed in the gospel. Hence, as 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' this grace is to be expected in that way which God has prescribed; and every one who is holy is made so by the Spirit, who glorifies himself in rendering men fruitful in every good work, they being raised by him from the death of sin to the life of faith in Christ; which is a blessing peculiar to the gospel.

2. Since holiness is required of all persons, as what is absolutely necessary to salvation, and is also recommended as that which God works in those in whom the gospel is made effectual to salvation; we may infer that no gospel doctrine has the least tendency to lead to licentiousness. The grace of God may indeed be abused; and men who are strangers to it may take occasion, from 'the abounding' of that grace, to 'continue in sin,' as some did in the apostle's days;^e but this is not the genuine tendency of the gospel, which is to lead men to holiness. Whatever duties it engages to, are all designed to answer this end; and whatever privileges

^a Mark xii. 34.

^b See Quest. lx.

^c Vid. G. J. Voss. de Hist. Græc. page 22.

^d See Gale's Court of the Gentiles, part iii. book i. chap. 1, 2. This learned writer having, in some other parts of that work, mentioned several things which were praiseworthy in some of the philosophers, here takes occasion to speak of some other things which were great blemishes in them. In other parts of this elaborate work, he proves that those who lived in the first ages of the church, and were attached to their philosophy, were by this means, as he supposes, led aside from many great and important truths of the gospel. Of this number were Origen, Justin Martyr, and several others. He farther supposes that what many of them advanced concerning the liberty of man's will, as to what respects spiritual things, gave occasion to the Pelagians to propagate those doctrines which were subversive of the grace of God; and that the Arian and Samosatian heresies took their rise from the same source. See part iii. book ii. chap. i.

^e Rom. vi. 1.

are offered in it, are all inducements to holiness. Are we 'delivered out of the hands of our' spiritual 'enemies?' It is 'that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.'^f As for the promises, they are an inducement to us, as the apostle expresses it, to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'^g And every ordinance and providence should be improved by us, to promote the work of sanctification.

3. Let us examine ourselves whether this work be begun and the grace of God wrought in us in truth, and, if so, whether it be increasing or declining in our souls. As to the truth of grace, let us take heed that we do not think we are something when we are nothing, deceiving our own souls; or rest in a form of godliness, while denying the power of it, or in a name to live, while we are dead. Let us think that it is not enough to abstain from grosser enormities, or engage in some external duties of religion, with wrong ends. If, upon inquiry into ourselves, we find that we are destitute of a principle of spiritual life and grace, let us not think that, because we have escaped some of the pollutions which are in the world, or do not run with others in all excess of riot, we therefore lead holy lives. But rather let us inquire whether the life we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, under the influence of his Spirit, with great diffidence of our own righteousness and strength, and firm dependence upon Christ; and whether, as the result of this, we are found in the practice of universal holiness, and hate and avoid all appearance of evil, using all those endeavours which are prescribed in the gospel, to glorify him in our spirits, souls, and bodies, which are his. If we have ground to hope that the work of sanctification is begun, let us inquire whether it be advancing or declining; whether we go from strength to strength, or make improvements in proportion to the privileges we enjoy. Many have reason to complain that it is not with them as in months past; that grace is languishing, the frame of their spirits in holy duties stupid, and they destitute of that communion with God which they once enjoyed. Such ought to remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works; and beg of God, from whom alone our fruit is derived, that he would revive the work of grace in them, and cause their souls to flourish in the courts of his house, and to bring forth much fruit unto holiness, to the glory of his own name and their spiritual peace and comfort. As for those who are frequently complaining of and bewailing their declensions in grace, who seem to others to be making a very considerable progress in it, let them not give way to unbelief, so far as to deny or set aside the experiences which they have had of God's presence with them; for sometimes grace grows, though without our own observation. If they are destitute of the comforts of it or of the fruits of righteousness, which are peace, assurance, and joy in the Holy Ghost, let them consider that the work of sanctification, in the present state, is, at best, but growing up towards that perfection to which it has not yet arrived. If it does not spring up and flourish, as to those fruits and effects of it which they are pressing after but have not attained, let them bless God if grace is taking root downward, and is attended with an humble sense of their own weakness and imperfection, and an earnest desire for those spiritual blessings which they are labouring after. This ought to afford matter of thankfulness, rather than have a tendency to weaken their hands, or induce them to conclude that they are in an unsanctified state because of the many hinderances and discouragements which attend their progress in holiness.

^f Luke i. 74, 75.

^g 2 Cor. vii. 1.

REPENTANCE.

QUESTION LXXVI. *What is Repentance unto life?*

ANSWER. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God; whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for, and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.

IN discussing this Answer we shall consider that the subject of repentance is a sinful fallen creature; that, though this is his condition, he is naturally averse to the exercise of repentance, till God is pleased to bring him to it; that the Spirit of God brings him to repent; and what are the various acts and effects of repentance.

The Subjects of Repentance.

No one can be said to repent but a sinner. Whatever other graces might be exercised by man in a state of innocency, or shall be exercised by him when brought to a state of perfection; there cannot, properly speaking, be any room for repentance. Some, indeed, have queried whether there shall be repentance in heaven. But it may easily be determined, that, though that hatred of sin in general and opposition to it which is contained in true repentance, is not inconsistent with a state of perfect blessedness, as it is inseparably connected with perfection of holiness; yet a sense of sin, which is afflictive, and is attended with grief and sorrow of heart for the guilt and consequences of sin, is altogether inconsistent with a state of perfection; and these are some ingredients in that repentance which comes under our present consideration. We must conclude, therefore, that the subject of repentance is a sinner.

Man's Natural Aversion to Repentance.

Though all sinners contract guilt, expose themselves to misery, and will sooner or later be filled with distress and sorrow for what they have done against God; yet many have no sense of it at present, nor repentance or remorse for it. These are described as 'past feeling,'^h as 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,'ⁱ as obstinate, and having 'their neck as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass.'^k There are several methods which they take to ward off the force of convictions. Sometimes they are stupid, and hardly give themselves the liberty to consider the difference which there is between moral good and evil, or the natural obligation we are under to pursue the one and avoid the other. They consider not the all-seeing eye of God, which observes all their actions, nor the power of his anger, who will take vengeance on impenitent sinners. They regard not the various aggravations of sin, nor consider that God will, for those things, bring them to judgment. Hence, impenitency is generally attended with presumption; whereby the person concludes, though without ground, that it shall go well with him in the end. Such an one is represented as blessing himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination,' or as it is in the margin, in the stubbornness 'of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.'^l Or if, on the other hand, he cannot but conclude that with God is terrible majesty, that he is a consuming fire, and that none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered, and if he does not fall down before him with humble confession of sin and repentance for it, he will certainly be broken with his rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel,—broken with a tempest, and utterly destroyed, when his wrath is kindled. Then he resolves that some time or other he will repent, but still delays and puts off repentance for a more convenient season; and though God gives him space to do it,

^h Eph. iv. 19.ⁱ Heb. iii. 13.^k Isa. xlviii. 4.^l Deut. xxix. 19.

he repenteth not.^m Thus he goes on in the greatness of his way, till God visits him with the blessings of his goodness, and brings him to repentance.

Repentance wrought by the Divine Spirit.

We are thus led to consider that repentance is God's work ; or, as is observed in this Answer, that it is wrought by the Spirit of God. Whether we consider it as a common or as a saving grace, it is the Spirit that convinces or reproves the world of sin. If it be of the same kind as that which Pharaoh, Ahab, or Judas had, it is excited by a dread of God's judgments, and his wrath breaking in upon conscience, when he reproves for sin, and sets it in order before their eyes. If they are touched with a sense of guilt, and, in consequence, stopped for the present, or obliged to make a retreat, and desist from pursuing their former methods, it is God, in the course of his providence, that gives a check to them. But this comes short of that repentance which is said to be unto life, or which is styled a saving grace ; which is wrought by the Spirit of God, as the beginning of that saving work which is a branch of sanctification, and shall end in complete salvation.

This is expressly styled, in scripture, 'repentance unto life,'ⁿ inasmuch as every one who is favoured with it shall obtain eternal life ; and it is connected with conversion and remission of sins, which will certainly end in eternal salvation. Thus it is said, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'^o For this reason it is called a saving grace, or a grace which accompanies salvation ; on which account it is distinguished from that repentance which some have who yet remain in a state of unregeneracy. It is also called 'repentance to salvation, not to be repented of ;'^p that is, it shall issue well ; and he who thus repents, shall, in the end, have reason to bless God, and rejoice in his grace, who has made him partaker of it.

The Means of Repentance.

We shall now consider the instrument or means whereby the Spirit works this grace. It is said to be 'wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the word of God,' as all other graces are, except regeneration, as was formerly observed. We must first suppose the principle of grace implanted, and the word presenting motives and arguments leading to repentance ; and then the understanding is enlightened and disposed to receive what is imparted. The word 'calls sinners to repentance.'^q Hence, when this grace is wrought, we are not only turned by the power of God, but 'instructed'^r by the Spirit's setting home what is contained in the word, whereby we are led into the knowledge of those things which are necessary to repentance. The word contains a display of the holiness of the divine nature and law, and of our obligation, in conformity to it, to exercise holiness of heart and life ; as God says, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'^s It contains also a display of the holiness of God in his threatenings, which he has denounced against every transgression and disobedience, which shall receive a just recompence of reward ; and in all the instances of his punishing sin in those who have exposed themselves to its penalty, that hereby he might deter men from it, and lead them to repentance. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of the law of God as 'holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good ;'^t and of its leading him into the knowledge of sin, by which means it appeared to be sin, that is, opposite to an holy God, and, as he expresses it, 'became exceeding sinful.'—Moreover, by the word of God persons are led into themselves ; and by comparing their hearts and lives with it, are enabled to see their own vileness and want of conformity to the rule which he has given them, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their hearts, and what occasion there is to abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Thus the apostle, in the place just mentioned, speaks of himself as 'once alive without the law ; but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died,' and he concluded himself to be 'carnal,

^m Rev. ii. 21.
^q Matt. ix. 13.

ⁿ Acts xi. 18.
^r Jer. xxxi. 19.

^o Chap. iii. 19.
^s Lev. xi. 44.

^p 2 Cor. vii. 10.
^t Rom. vii. 12, 13.

sold under sin.^u This is a necessary means leading to repentance.—We may add that God makes use, not only of the word, but of his providences to answer this end. Hence, he speaks of a sinning people, when ‘carried away captive into the land of the enemy,’ as ‘bethinking’ themselves, and afterwards ‘repenting and making supplication to him.’^x We read also of sickness and bodily diseases as ordained by God to bring persons to repentance. Thus Elihu speaks of a person being ‘chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; his soul drawing nigh to the grave, and his life to the destroyers;’^y and then represents the person thus chastened, and afterwards recovered from his sickness, as acknowledging that he had ‘sinned and perverted that which is right, and that it profited him not.’ The apostle likewise speaks of ‘the goodness of God’ in the various dispensations of his providence, as ‘leading to repentance.’^z But these dispensations are always to be considered in conjunction with the word, and as impressed on the consciences of men by the Spirit, in order to their attaining this desirable end.—In order, however, that we may insist on this matter more particularly, we must take an estimate of repentance, either as it is a common or a special grace. In both these respects it is from the Spirit, and wrought by the instrumentality of the word, applied to the consciences of men; but there is a vast difference between the one and the other in the application of the word, as well as in the effects and consequences.

1. As to those who are brought under convictions, but not made partakers of the saving grace of repentance, the Holy Spirit awakens them, and fills them with the terrors of God, and the dread of his vengeance, ‘by the law,’ by which ‘is the knowledge of sin,’ and ‘all the world becomes guilty before God.’^a These are what we call legal convictions; whereby the wound is opened, but no healing medicine applied. The sinner apprehends himself under a sentence of condemnation, but at the same time cannot apply any promise which may afford hope and relief to him; groans under his burden, and knows not where to find ease or comfort, and dreads the consequences as what would sink him into hell. God appears to him as a consuming fire; his arrows stick fast in his soul; the poison of them drinketh up his spirits. If he endeavour to shake off his fears, and to relieve himself against his despairing thoughts, he is, notwithstanding, ‘described as being like ‘the troubled sea,’ when it ‘cannot rest,’ which ‘casts forth mire and dirt.’^b This is a most afflictive case; concerning which it is said, that though ‘the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear?’^c [See Note N, page 152.] Thus it is with some when convinced of sin by the law. But there are others who endeavour to quiet their consciences by using indirect methods, thinking to make atonement for their sin, and by some instances of external reformation to make God amend, and thereby procure his favour, but to no purpose; for ‘sin taking occasion by the commandment, works in them all manner of concupiscence.’^d And if they grow stupid, which is often the consequence, their sense of sin is entirely lost, and their repentance ends in presumption, and a great degree of boldness in the commission of all manner of wickedness.

2. We shall now consider how the Spirit works repentance unto life, which is principally insisted on in this Answer. This is said to be done by the word of God; not by the law without the gospel, but by them both, the one being made subservient to the other. The law shows the sinner his sin, and the gospel directs him where he may find a remedy. The one wounds and the other heals. ‘The law enters,’ as the apostle expresses it, ‘that the offence might abound;’^e but the gospel shows him how ‘grace does much more abound,’ and where he may obtain forgiveness. By this means he is kept from sinking under the weight of guilt which lies on his conscience. The gospel also leads him, from motives which are truly excellent, to hate and abstain from sin; for which reason his repentance is called evangelical.

^u Rom. vii. 9, 14.

^z Rom. ii. 4.

^c Prov. xviii. 14.

^x 1 Kings viii. 46, 47.

^a Rom. iii. 20. compared with 19.

^d Rom. vii. 8.

^y Job xxxiii. 19, 27.

^b Isa. lvii. 20.

^e Rom. v. 20.

The Difference between Legal and Evangelical Repentance.

That we may better understand the nature of this repentance, we shall consider how it differs from that which we before described, which arises only from conviction of sin by the law, which a person may have who is destitute of this grace of repentance which we are speaking of. Repentance, of what kind soever it be, includes a sense of sin. But if the sense of sin be such as an unregenerate person may have, it includes little more than a sense of the danger and misery which he has exposed himself to by sins committed. The principal motives leading to it are the threatenings which the law of God denounces against those who violate it. Destruction from God is a terror to him who has such a sense of sin; and if this were not the consequence of sin, he would be so far from repenting of it, that it would be the object of his chief delight. Besides, that guilt which he charges himself with is principally such as arises from the commission of the most notorious crimes, which expose him to the greatest degree of punishment. Repentance unto life, on the contrary, brings a soul under a sense of the guilt of sin, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God, which the least, as well as the greatest sins, are opposed to, and contain a violation of. He, therefore, who has this repentance, charges himself not only with open sins which are detestable in the eyes of men, but with secret sins which others have little or no sense of,—sins of omission as well as sins of commission; and he is particularly affected with the sin of unbelief, inasmuch as it contains a contempt of Christ and of the grace of the gospel. He is sensible not only of those sins which break forth in his life, but of that propensity of nature whereby he is inclined to rebel against God. Hence, the sense of guilt which he entertains differs, in some respects, from that which those are brought under who are destitute of saving repentance. But that in which they more especially differ is, that saving repentance includes a sense of the filth and odious nature of sin, and so considers it as defiling, or contrary to the holiness of God, and rendering the soul worthy to be abhorred by him. Hence, as the sense of guilt excites fear, and a dread of the wrath of God; so this sense of the odious nature of sin fills him with shame, confusion of face, and self-abhorrence. These are inseparably connected with the grace of repentance. Accordingly, they are joined together, as Job says, ‘I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;’^f or as God describes his people when he promises that he will bestow this blessing on them, ‘Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.’^g Before this they set too high a value upon themselves, and were ready to palliate and excuse their crimes, or insist on their innocence, though their iniquity was written in legible characters, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, and to say with Ephraim, ‘In all my labour they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin,’^h and resembled the rebellious people concerning whom the prophet Jeremiah says, that ‘though in their skirts were found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents,’ they had the front to say, ‘Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.’ⁱ When, however, God brings them to repentance, and heals their backslidings, they express themselves in a very different way: ‘We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.’^k Now, this is such an ingredient in true repentance as is not to be found in that which falls short of being a saving grace. In the latter case, the sinner is afraid of punishment indeed, or perhaps he may be filled with shame because of the reproach which attends his vile and notorious crimes in the eyes of the world; yet he is not ashamed or confounded, as considering how vile he has rendered himself in the eye of a holy God.

There is another thing observed in this Answer which is an ingredient in repentance unto life. This repentance is connected with faith, inasmuch as he who is the subject of it apprehends the mercy of God in Christ to such as are penitent; and this effectually secures him from that despair which sometimes, as was before

f Job xlii. 6. g Ezek. xxxvi. 31. h Hos. xii. 8. i Jer. ii. 34, 35. k Chap. iii. 25.

observed, attends a legal repentance, as well as affords him relief against the sense of guilt with which this grace is attended. The difference between legal and evangelical repentance does not so much consist in the former representing sin as more aggravated, or in inducing him who is the subject of it to think himself a greater sinner than the other ; for the true penitent is ready to confess himself the chief of sinners. He is far from extenuating his sin ; being ready on all occasions to charge himself with more guilt than others are generally sensible of. But that which he depends upon as his only comfort and support is the mercy of God in Christ, or the consideration that there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared. This is what affords the principal motive and encouragement to repentance, and has a tendency to excite the various acts of it.

The Various Acts of Evangelical Repentance.

We are thus led to consider what are the various acts of repentance unto life, or what are the fruits and effects produced by it.

1. The soul is filled with hatred of sin. When he who truly repents looks back on his past life, he bewails what cannot now be avoided, charges himself with folly and madness, and wishes, though to no purpose, that he had done many things which he has omitted, and avoided those sins, together with the occasions of them, which he has committed, the guilt of which lies with great weight upon him. How glad would he be if lost seasons and opportunities of grace might be recalled, and the talents which were once put into his hand, though misimproved, regained ! But all these wishes are in vain. These, however, are the after-thoughts which will arise in the minds of those who are brought under a sense of sin. Sin wounds the soul. The Spirit of God, when convincing of it, opens the wound, and causes a person to feel the smart of it, and gives him to know that ‘it is an evil thing, and bitter, that he has forsaken the Lord his God.’¹ This sometimes depresses the spirits, and causes him to walk softly, to ‘sit alone and keep silence,’^m being filled with an uneasiness which is very afflictive to him. At other times it gives vent to itself in tears, ‘I am weary,’ says the psalmist, ‘with my groaning ; all the night make I my bed to swim ; I water my couch with my tears.’ⁿ In this case, the only thing which gives the penitent relief or comfort is, that the guilt of sin is removed by the blood of Christ, which tends to quiet his spirit, which would otherwise be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. We may add that sin is always the object of his detestation, even when there is an abatement of that grief which, by the divine supports and comforts, he is protected against. He hates sin, not merely because of the sad consequences of it, but as it is in itself the object of abhorrence. His heart is hence set against all sin ; as the psalmist says, ‘I hate every false way.’^o This hatred discovers itself by putting him upon fleeing from it, together with all the occasions of it, or incentives to it. He not only abstains from those sins which they who have little more than the remains of moral virtue are ashamed of and afraid to commit, but hates every thing which has the appearance of sin ; and this hatred is irreconcilable. As forgiveness does not make sin less odious in its own nature ; so whatever experience he has of the grace of God in forgiveness, or whatever measure of peace he enjoys, whereby his grief and sorrow are assuaged, his hatred of sin not only remains but increases.

2. He, therefore, turns from sin unto God. He first hates sin, and then flees from it ; seeing it to be the spring of all his grief and fears,—that which separates between him and his God. Thus Ephraim, when brought to repentance, and reflecting with a kind of indignation on his past conduct, when addicted to idols, is represented as saying, ‘What have I to do any more with idols ?’^c So the true penitent, who has hitherto been walking in those paths which lead to death and destruction, now inquires after the way of holiness, and the paths of peace. As he has hitherto walked contrary to God, now he desires to walk with him ; and having wearied himself in the greatness of his way, and seeing no fruit in those things

¹ Jer. ii. 19.

^m Lam. iii. 28.

ⁿ Psal. vi. 6.

^o Psal. cxix. 104.

^p Hos. xiv. 8.

whereof he is now ashamed, and being brought into the utmost straits, he determines to return to his God and Father. In doing this he purposes and endeavours to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts those who had received good by his ministry that, 'with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.'^q This purpose is not like those hasty resolutions which unconverted sinners make, when God is hedging up their way with thorns, and they are under the most distressing apprehensions of his wrath. Then they say as the people did to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord ;'^r though they are not sensible how difficult it is to fulfil the engagements which they lay themselves under, or of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and the need they stand in of grace from God to enable them so to do. This purpose to walk with God does not so much respect what a person will do hereafter ; but it contains a resolution which is immediately put in execution ; and so is opposed to the penitent's former obstinacy, when determining to go on in the way of his own heart. Thus the prodigal son, in the parable, no sooner resolved that he would 'arise and go to his Father,'^s than he arose and went. True repentance is always attended with endeavours after new obedience ; so that a person lays aside that sloth and indolence which was inconsistent with his setting a due value on or improving the means of grace. As the result of this, he now exerts himself, with all his might, in pursuing after those things by which he may approve himself God's faithful servant. And hereby he discovers the sincerity of his repentance. This he does, or rather is enabled to do, by that grace which at first began and then carries on this work in the soul, and by which he 'has his fruit unto holiness, and the end' thereof 'everlasting life.'^t

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Repentance.

1. From what has been said we may infer that, since repentance is a grace which accompanies salvation, and consequently is absolutely necessary to it, it is an instance of unwarrantable and bold presumption, for impenitent sinners to expect that they shall be made partakers of the benefits which Christ has purchased, while they continue in a state of enmity, opposition, and rebellion against him, or that they shall be saved by him in their sins, without being saved from them. For 'he that covereth his sins, shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.'^u

2. Since repentance is the work of the Spirit, and his gift, we infer that whatever endeavours we are obliged to use, or whatever motives or inducements are given to lead us to it, we must not conclude that it is in our own power to repent when we please. It should, therefore, be the matter of our earnest and constant prayer to God, that he would turn our hearts, give us a true sight and sense of sin, accompanied with faith in Christ ; as Ephraim is represented, saying, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.'^x

3. Let not those who have a distressing sense of their former sins, how great soever they have been, give way to despairing thoughts ; but let them lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ, extended to the chief of sinners, and improve it to encourage them, from evangelical motives, to hate sin, and forsake it. There will be a tendency to remove their fears while they look on God, not as a sin-revenging judge, but a reconciled Father, ready and willing to receive those who return to him with unfeigned repentance.

4. Since we daily commit sin, it follows that we stand in need of daily repentance. Moreover, repentance being a branch of sanctification, as the latter is a progressive work, so is the former. We are not to expect that sin should be wholly extirpated while we are in this imperfect state ; and therefore it is constantly to be bewailed, and by the grace of God working effectually in us, avoided ; that, in consequence, we may have a comfortable hope that the promise shall be fulfilled, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'^y

q Acts xi. 23.

r Josh. xxiv. 21.

s Luke xv. 18. comp. with 20.

t Rom. vi. 22.

u Prov. xxviii. 13.

x Jer. xxxi. 18.

y Psal. cxxvi. 5.

[NOTE N. *Legal Convictions of Sin.*—That there are “persons brought under convictions of sin, but not made partakers of the saving grace of repentance,” is beyond doubt. But are we to believe that their convictions result from the work of the Holy Spirit on their soul, or, in other words, that, like all convictions which the Divine Spirit produces, they spring up in connexion with an exhibition to the mind of the work of Christ and the plan of mercy? To discuss this question here would only be to repeat in substance what was said in a former note, under the title “Common Grace.” But I may remark that when the Saviour spake of the Comforter coming to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, he added, ‘He will guide you into all truth; * * * he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you,’—that when, through the prophet Zechariah, he promised to pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, he said, ‘They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,’—that the inspired comment upon the declaration, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,’ points us to the scenes of the day of Pentecost when ‘all were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance,’ and when, in connexion with the exhibition of Christ as the Saviour, men not only were ‘goaded in their heart,’ but ‘received the word gladly,’—and that, in general throughout the scriptures, the economical work of the Divine Spirit is represented as a work of grace and a work connected with salvation, while such conviction of sin as he produces is exhibited as resulting by means of a disclosure to the mind, not only of the claims of the divine law, but of the mediatorial work of the Redeemer. Convictions of sin, therefore, which are not attended with the saving grace of repentance, would seem to arise wholly from the effects of God’s general moral administration, making impression upon man’s natural conscience. They are, accordingly, found to be experienced by men in all varieties of circumstances,—not only as enjoying the ministration of the gospel and its ordinances, but as living amidst the ignorance and stupidities of heathenism. Mere conscience, when roused by peculiar occurrences, has proverbially an agitating and even terrific power; and it produces or entertains convictions of sin, self-accusations of guilt, which, whether weak or strong, are distinguished from the hallowing convictions produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit, just by their being unaccompanied with ‘the saving grace of repentance.’ While conviction accompanied with grace is just repentance, or a part of it, conviction unaccompanied with grace is unmingled self-accusation or remorse. Hence, persons who experience the latter may be to the full as miserable as Dr. Ridgeley describes. It is doubtful, however, whether the passage which he quotes has reference to the misery arising from their convictions: ‘The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.’ The words would rather seem to describe the wretchedness arising from the depravity of their nature,—the turbulence and tempestuousness of their unholy passions,—the tumult and agitation of proud and angry tempers, and of ungovernable and rabid lusts, which continually cast up, in the thoughts and conduct, pollution and vileness and every thing at war with tranquillity or repose.—ED.]

THE CONNECTION AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

QUESTION LXXVII. *Wherein do Justification and Sanctification differ?*

ANSWER. Although Sanctification be inseparably joined with Justification; yet they differ, in that God, in Justification, imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in Sanctification, his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former sin is pardoned, in the other it is subdued; the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation, the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

THIS Answer being principally a recapitulation of what is contained in those which have been already insisted on, wherein the doctrine of justification and sanctification are particularly explained, we shall not much enlarge on it. But as there are some who suppose that one of these graces may be attained without the other; and as others confound them, as though to be justified and to be sanctified implied the same thing; we shall briefly consider, first, what is supposed in this Answer, namely, that justification and sanctification are inseparably joined together, and next, what is directly contained in the Answer, namely, some things in which justification and sanctification differ.

The Connection between Justification and Sanctification.

Sanctification and justification are inseparably joined together; so that no one has a warrant to claim the one without the other. This appears from the fact that they are graces which accompany salvation. When the apostle connects justifica-

tion and effectual calling together in the golden chain of our salvation,^z he includes sanctification in this calling. Elsewhere, when Christ is said to be 'made righteousness and redemption' to us for our justification, he is, at the same time, said to be made 'wisdom and sanctification.'^a We are also said to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,'^b which is the beginning of the work of sanctification, 'that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Speaking of some who were once great sinners, and afterwards made true believers, the apostle says, that they were 'washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'^c And when God promises to pardon and 'pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage,'^d he also gives them ground to expect that he would 'subdue their iniquities.' The former of these he does in justification; the latter, in sanctification.

From the connection which there is between justification and sanctification, we infer that no one has ground to conclude that his sins are pardoned, and that he shall be saved, while he is in an unsanctified state. For as such a supposition tends to turn the grace of God into wantonness; so it separates what he has joined together, and, in those who entertain it, is a certain evidence that they are neither justified nor sanctified. Let us therefore give diligence to evince the truth of our justification, by our sanctification; or that we have a right and title to Christ's righteousness, by the life of faith, and the exercise of all those other graces which accompany or flow from it.

The Difference between Justification and Sanctification.

We have, in this Answer, an account of some things in which justification and sanctification differ.

1. 'In justification God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us; whereas, in sanctification the Spirit infuseth grace and enableth to the exercise thereof.' What it is for God to impute Christ's righteousness has been already considered. We shall at present, therefore, make only one additional remark. The righteousness whereby we are justified is, without us, wrought out by Christ for us,—so that it is 'by his obedience,' as the apostle expresses it, that 'we are made righteous';^e and that which Christ did as our surety, is placed to our account and accepted by the justice of God as if it had been done by us. In sanctification, on the other hand, the graces of the Spirit are wrought and excited in us; and we are denominated holy, and our right to eternal life is evinced, though not procured.

2. In justification sin is pardoned; in sanctification it is subdued. The former takes away its guilt; the latter its reigning power. When sin is pardoned, it shall not be our ruin; yet it gives us daily disturbance and uneasiness, makes work for repentance, and is to be opposed by our dying to it, and living to righteousness. This is, therefore, sufficiently distinguished from justification; which is also to be considered as a motive or inducement leading to it.

3. Justification equally frees all believers from the avenging wrath of God, in which respect it is perfect in this life, so that a justified person shall never fall into condemnation; whereas, the work of sanctification is not equal in all, not perfect in this life, but growing up to perfection. For understanding this, let us consider that when we speak of justification as perfect in this life, or say that all are equally justified, we mean that when God forgives one sin, he forgives all; so that, as the apostle says, 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'^f And he adds, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died.'^g Were it not so, a person might be said to be justified, and not have a right to eternal life, which implies a contradiction; for though he might be acquitted, as to the guilt charged upon him by one indictment, he would be condemned by that which is contained in another. We may hence infer, that all justified persons have an equal right to

z Rom. viii. 30.

d Micah vii. 18, 19.

11.

a 1 Cor. i. 31.

e Rom. v. 19.

b Tit. iii. 5.

f Chap. viii. 1.

c 1 Cor. vi. 11.

g Verses 33, 34.

conclude themselves discharged from guilt, and the condemning sentence of the law of God ; though all cannot see their right to claim this privilege by reason of the weakness of their faith. Sanctification, on the other hand, is far from being equal in all ; for the best of believers have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the imperfection of all other graces which are wrought in them by the Spirit. If it be inquired whence this imperfection of sanctification arises, a reply will be given under the following Answer.

THE IMPERFECTION OF SANCTIFICATION.

QUESTION LXXVIII. *Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers ?*

ANSWER. The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit, whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.

In this Answer, we may consider, first, that there is something supposed, namely, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life, or that there are the remnants of sin still abiding in the best of men ; secondly, in what the imperfection of sanctification more especially discovers itself, and in particular, what we are to understand by the lusting of the flesh against the spirit ; and thirdly, the consequences of this, namely, their being foiled with temptations, falling into many sins, and being hindered in their spiritual services.

The Imperfection of Believers.

The thing supposed in this Answer, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life, must be allowed by all who are not strangers to themselves. It is said, ‘There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.’^h Fine gold is not without a mixture of some baser metal or alloy ; even so, our best frames of spirit, when we think ourselves nearest heaven, or when we have most communion with God, are not without a tincture of indwelling sin, which is easy to be discerned in us. Whatever grace we exercise, there are some defects attending it, with respect either to the manner of its exerting itself, or to the degree of it. Perfection, therefore, how desirable soever it be, is a blessing which we cannot at present attain to. And if it be thus with us when at the best, we shall find that, at other times, corrupt nature not only discovers itself, but gives us great interruption and disturbance ; so that the work of sanctification seems to be, as it were, at a stand, and we are induced to question the truth and sincerity of our graces. If, notwithstanding this, we have sufficient ground to conclude that our hearts are right with God ; we are still obliged to say with the apostle, that we are ‘carnal, sold under sin,’ and that, ‘when we would do good, evil is present with us.’ⁱ This is an undeniable proof of the imperfection of the work of sanctification.

The contrary opinion is maintained by many ; who pretend that perfection is attainable in this life. To gain countenance to their opinion, they refer to some scriptures in which persons are characterized as ‘perfect’ men, and to others in which perfection is represented as a duty incumbent on us. Thus our Saviour says, ‘Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ;’^k and the apostle, in his valedictory exhortation to the church, advises them to ‘be perfect,’ as well as ‘of one mind,’ as they expected that the God of love and peace should be with them.^l These scriptures, however, speak not of a sinless perfection, but of such a perfection as is opposed to hypocrisy ; as Hezekiah says concerning himself, that he had ‘walked before the Lord in truth, and with a perfect heart.’^m The perfection of those who are thus described in scripture, is explained as denoting their uprightness.

^h Eccl. vii. 20.
^l 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

ⁱ Rom. vii. 14, compared with 21.
^m Isa. xxxviii. 3.

^k Matt. v. 48.

Thus Job is described as 'a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil ;'ⁿ though he elsewhere disclaims any pretensions to a sinless perfection, and says, 'If I say I am perfect, mine own mouth shall prove me perverse.'^o So when Noah is said to have been 'perfect in his generations,' the statement is explained as denoting that he was a 'just' or an 'holy man,' and one that 'walked with God.'^p As for scriptures which speak of perfection as a duty incumbent on us, they are to be understood, not concerning a perfection of degrees, but concerning the perfection of grace, as to those essential parts of it without which it could not be denominated true and genuine. True grace is perfect indeed, as it contains those necessary ingredients whereby an action is denominated good in all its circumstances, in opposition to that which is so only in some respects ; and therefore it must proceed from a good principle, a heart renewed by regenerating grace ; it must be agreeable to the rule which God has prescribed in the gospel, and be performed in a right manner and for right ends. Thus a person may be said to be a perfect man, just as a new-born infant is denominated a man, as having all the essential perfections of the human nature, though not arrived at that perfection, in other respects, to which it shall afterwards attain. Accordingly, grace, when described in scripture as perfect, is sometimes explained by a metaphorical allusion to a state of perfect manhood, in opposition to that of children. In this manner the apostle speaks of some, whom he represents as 'being of full age,'—where the same word is used ^q which is elsewhere rendered 'perfect ;' and these he opposes to others whom he had been speaking of as weak believers, or 'babes' in Christ.^r Elsewhere also he speaks of the church, which he styles 'the body of Christ,' as arrived at a state of manhood, and so calls it 'a perfect man,' which had attained 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'—still alluding to that stature at which persons arrive when they are adult ; and these he opposes in the following words, to children, who, through the weakness of their faith, were liable to be 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.'^s Moreover, in other places where Christians are described as perfect, there is a word used which signifies their having that internal furniture whereby they are prepared or disposed to do what is good. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the man of God' being 'perfect,'^t that is, 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'^u Elsewhere also he prays for those to whom he writes, that God would 'make them perfect in,' or for, 'every good work,' to the end 'that they may do his will.'^x This is such a perfection as is necessary to our putting forth any act of grace ; and therefore does not in the least infer that perfection which they plead for whom we are now opposing.

Indeed, they take occasion to defend their doctrine, not merely from the sense they give of those scriptures which speak of persons being perfect,—which they cannot but suppose may be otherwise understood ; but the main thing from which they defend it is the opinion that God does not require sinless perfection of fallen man, inasmuch as that is impossible,—and that therefore he calls that perfection which includes our using those endeavours to lead a good life which are in our own power. This opinion is agreeable to the Pelagian scheme, and to that which the Papists maintain ; who make farther advances on the Pelagian hypothesis, and assert, not only that men may attain perfection in this life, but that they may arrive at such a degree of it as exceeds the demands of the law, and perform works of supererogation. This doctrine is calculated to establish that of justification by works. What may be alleged in opposition to it is, that it is disagreeable to the divine perfections, and a notorious making void of the law of God, to assert that our obligation to yield perfect obedience ceases, because we have lost our power to perform it ; as though a person's being insolvent, were a sufficient excuse for his not paying a just debt. We must distinguish between God's demanding perfect obedience as an outstanding debt, which is consistent with the glory of his holiness and sovereignty as a law-giver ; and his determining that we shall not be saved, unless we perform it in our

ⁿ Job i. 1, compared with 8.

^o Chap. ix. 20.

^p Gen. vi. 9.

^q *Τελειοι*.

^r Heb. v. 13, 14.

^s Eph. iv. 13, 14.

^t *Ἀρτιος*.

^u 2 Tim. iii. 17.

^x The word is *καταρτίζειν* ; which signifies to give them an internal disposition or fitness for the performance of the duties which they were to engage in. Heb. xiii. 21.

own persons. We also distinguish between his connecting a right to eternal life with our performing perfect obedience, as what he might justly insist on according to the tenor of the first covenant, as our Saviour tells the young man in the gospel, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;'^y and his resolving that we shall not be saved, unless we are able to perform it. The gospel proposes another expedient, namely, that they who were obliged to yield perfect obedience, and ought to be humbled for their inability to perform it, should depend on Christ's righteousness, which is the foundation of their right to eternal life; in which respect they are said to be perfect or 'complete in him.'^z This is the only just notion of perfection, as attainable in this life. To conclude this Head, it is very unreasonable for a person to suppose that God will abate some part of the debt of perfect obedience, and so to call our performing those works which have many imperfections adhering to them, a state of perfection. To do this, is to make it an easier matter to be a Christian than God has made it. Thus concerning the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life.

Why Believers are allowed to be Imperfect.

But before we pass to another subject, we shall inquire why God does not bring this work to perfection at once; which he could easily have done, and, as is certain, will do when he brings the soul to heaven. Now, let it be considered in general, that it is not meet for us to say unto God, Why dost thou thus? especially considering that this, as well as many of his other works, is designed to display the glory of his sovereignty; which very eminently appears in the beginning, carrying on, and perfecting the work of grace. We may as well ask the reason, why he did not begin the work of sanctification sooner, or why he makes use of this or that instrument or means rather than another to effect it. These things are to be resolved into his own pleasure. But as it is evident that he does not bring this work to perfection in this world, we may adore his wisdom in this arrangement, as well as his sovereignty.

1. Hereby he gives his people occasion to exercise repentance and godly sorrow for their former sins committed before they were converted. Perfect holiness would admit of no occasion to bring past sins to remembrance; but when we sin daily, and have daily need of the exercise of repentance and godly sorrow, we have occasion to entertain a more sensible view of past sins. When corrupt nature discovers itself in those who are converted, they take occasion to consider how they have been transgressors from the womb. Thus David, when he repented of his sin in the matter of Uriah, at the same time that he aggravated the guilt of this crime as it justly deserved, he called to mind his former sins from his very infancy, and charged that guilt upon himself which he brought into the world: 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.'^a And when Job considers God's afflictive providences towards him, as designed to bring sin to remembrance, and desires that he would 'make him to know his transgression and his sin;' he adds, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'^b Sins committed after conversion were brought to mind, and ordered as a means to humble him for those which were committed before it. As for sins committed before conversion, they cannot, till he who has committed them be converted, be said to be truly repented of; for to say that they can would be to suppose the grace of repentance antecedent to conversion. Hence, if the work of sanctification were to be immediately brought to perfection, perfect holiness would here be as much attended with perfect happiness as it is in heaven, and consequently godly sorrow would be no more exercised on earth than it is there. But God, in ordering the gradual progress of the work of sanctification, attended with the remains of sin, gives occasion to many humbling reflections, tending to excite unfeigned repentance, not only for sins committed after they had experienced the grace of God, but for those great lengths they ran in sin before they tasted that the Lord was gracious. On this account, he does not bring the work of sanctification to perfection in this present world.

y Matt. xix. 16.

z Col. ii. 10.

a Psal. li. 5.

b Job xiii. 23, 26.

2. Another reason of this dispensation of providence is, that believers, from their own experience of the breakings forth of corruption, together with the guilt they contract thereby, and the advantage they receive in gaining any victory over it, may be qualified to administer suitable advice and warning to those who are in a state of unregeneracy, that they may be persuaded to see the evil of sin, which at present they do not.

3. God farther orders this, that he may give occasion to his people to exercise a daily conflict with indwelling sin. He suffers it to give them great disturbance and uneasiness, that they may be induced to endeavour to mortify it, and be found in the exercise of such graces as are adapted to an imperfect state. These graces cannot be exercised in heaven; nor could they be exercised on earth, were believers to be brought into a sinless state and remain in it while here; particularly there could not be any acts of faith, in managing that conflict whereby they endeavour to stand their ground while exposed to the difficulties which arise from the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit.

How the Imperfection of Sanctification is displayed.

We are now led to inquire in what the imperfection of sanctification more especially discovers itself. This it does in the weakness of every grace which we are at any time enabled to act, and in the many failures we are chargeable with in the performance of every duty incumbent upon us; so that, as appears from what was said under a former Head concerning perfection as not attainable in this life, if an exact scrutiny were made into our best actions, and they weighed in the balance, they would be found very defective. But the imperfection of sanctification more particularly appears, as is observed in this Answer, from the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,'^c and of the contrariety of the one to the other, 'so that we cannot do the things that we would;' and he points himself out as an instance when he says, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'^d This reluctance and opposition to what is good, he lays to the charge of sin which dwelt in him, which he considers as having, as it were, the force of a law. In particular, he styles it 'the law of his members warring against the law of his mind;' which is the same thing as the lusting of the flesh against the spirit. It hence appears that, when God implants a principle of grace in regeneration, and carries on the work of sanctification in believers, he does not wholly destroy or root out those habits of sin which were formerly in the soul, but enables us to militate against and overcome them by his implanting and exciting a principle of grace. Hence arises this conflict which we are to consider.

Indwelling sin is constantly opposing the principle of grace; but it does not always prevail against it. The event or success of this combat is various, at different times. When corrupt nature prevails, the principle of grace, though not wholly extinguished, remains inactive, or does not exert itself as at other times. All grace becomes languid, and there appears but little difference between the believer and an unbeliever. He falls into very great sins, whereby he wounds his own conscience, grieves the Holy Spirit, and makes sad work for a bitter repentance, which will afterwards follow. But as the principle of spiritual life and grace is not wholly lost, it will some time or other be excited, and then will oppose the flesh or the corruption of nature, and maintain its ground against it; and, as the result, those acts of grace will be again put forth which were before suspended.

Having thus given an account of the conflict between indwelling sin and grace, we shall now more particularly show how the habits of sin exert themselves in those who are unregenerate, where there is no principle of grace to oppose them, and then how they exert themselves in believers, what opposition is made to them by the

principle of grace in them, and how it comes to pass that sometimes the one prevails, and sometimes the other.

1. We shall consider those violent efforts which are made by corrupt nature, in those who are unregenerate. Though there is no principle of grace in such persons to enable them to withstand these; yet they have a conflict in their own spirits. There is something in nature which, for a time, keeps them from complying with temptations to the greatest sins; though the flesh, or that propensity which is in them to sin, will prevail at last, and lead them from one degree of impiety to another, unless prevented by the grace of God. Here the conflict is between corrupt nature and an enlightened conscience. This is the case more especially in those who have had the advantage of a religious education, and the good example of some whom they have conversed with, whereby they have contracted some habits of moral virtue which are not immediately extinguished. It is not an easy matter to persuade them to commit those gross and scandalous sins which others, whose minds are blinded, and whose hearts are hardened to a greater degree by the deceitfulness of sin, commit with greediness and without remorse. The principles of education are not immediately broken through; for in this case men meet with a great struggle in their own breasts, before they entirely lose them; and they proceed, by various steps, from one degree of wickedness to another.^e A breach is first made in the fence, and afterwards widened by a continuance in the same sins, or by committing new ones, especially such as have in them a greater degree of presumption. The individual is hence disposed to comply with temptations to greater sins; though it would be to no purpose to tempt him to be openly profane, blaspheme the name of God, or cast off all external forms of religion, and abandon himself to those immoralities which the most notoriously wicked and profligate sinners commit without shame, till he has paved the way to them by the commission of other sins which lead to them.

That which at first prevents or restrains him from the commission of them, is something short of a principle of grace: we call it the dictates of natural conscience, which often checks and reproves him. His natural temper or disposition is not at present so far vitiated as to allow of anything which is openly vile and scandalous, or to incline him to pursue it. He abhors it, and, as it were, trembles at the thought of it. Thus, when Hazeel was told by the prophet Elisha of all the evil which he would do to the children of Israel, that he would 'set their strongholds on fire, slay their young men with the sword, dash their children, and rip up their women with child,' he entertained the thought with a kind of abhorrence, and said, 'But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?'^f Yet afterwards, when king of Syria, we find him of another mind; for he was a greater scourge to the people of God than any of the neighbouring princes, and 'smote them in all the coasts of Israel.'^g Now, that which prevents these greater sins is generally fear or shame. Men's consciences terrify them with the thoughts of the wrath of God to which they would expose themselves by committing them; or they are apprehensive that such a course of life would blast their reputation amongst men, and be altogether inconsistent with that form of godliness which they have had a liking to from their childhood. But as these restraints do not proceed from the internal and powerful influence of regenerating grace, being excited by lower motives than those which the Spirit of God suggests in those who are converted, —as natural conscience is the main restraint, corrupt nature first endeavours to counteract its dictates, and by degrees gets the mastery over them. When conscience reproves the transgressors, they first offer a bribe to it by performing some moral duties to silence its accusations for presumptuous sins, and pretend that their crime falls short of those committed by many others. At other times, they complain of its being too strict in its demands of duty, or severe in its reproofs for sin. If all this will not prevail against it, and if it still perform the office of a faithful reprover, the sinner resolves to stop his ears against convictions. If even this will

^e It is a true observation which some have laid down in this known aphorism, 'Nemo repente fit turpissimus.'

^f 2 Kings viii. 12, 13.

^g Chap. x. 32.

not altogether prevent his being made uneasy, he betakes himself to those diversions which may give another turn to his thoughts; he will not allow himself time for serious reflection; he associates with those whose conversation will effectually tend to extinguish all his former impressions of moral virtue. By this means he at last stupifies his conscience, so that it becomes, as the apostle expresses it, 'seared with a hot iron;' and so he gets, as I may express it, a fatal victory over himself, and henceforth meets with no reluctance or opposition in his own breast, while, 'being past feeling, he gives himself over unto lasciviousness, to work uncleanness' and all manner of 'iniquity with greediness.'

2. We are now led to consider the conflict which is between the flesh and the spirit in those in whom the work of sanctification is begun. Here we shall first observe the lustings of the flesh; and then the opposition it meets with from the principle of grace implanted and excited in them, which is called the lusting of the spirit against it. Now, as to corrupt nature exerting itself in believers to prevent the actings of grace, what gives occasion to it is the Spirit's withdrawing his powerful influences; which, when the soul is favoured with them, have a tendency to prevent those pernicious consequences which otherwise ensue. God withdraws these powerful influences sometimes in a way of sovereignty, to show the believer that it is not in his own power to avoid sin when he will, or that he cannot, without the aids of divine grace, withstand those temptations which are offered to him to commit it. Or God withdraws these influences with a design to let him know what is in his heart, to give him occasion to humble him for past sins or present miscarriages, and to make him more watchful for the future.—Again, there are some things which present themselves in an objective way, which are as so many snares laid to entangle him. Corrupt nature makes a bad improvement of these; so that his natural constitution is more and more vitiated by giving way to sin, and defiled by the remains of sin which dwelleth in him. The temptation is generally adapted to the corrupt inclination of his nature, and Satan has a hand in it. Thus, if his natural temper incline him to be proud or ambitious, immediately the honours and applause of the world are presented to him; and he never wants examples of those who, in an unlawful way, have gained a great measure of esteem in the world, and made themselves considerable in the stations in which they have been placed. If he is naturally addicted to pleasures, of what kind soever they be, something is offered which is agreeable to corrupt nature, and which seems delightful to it, though it is in itself sinful. If he is more than ordinarily addicted to covetousness, the profits and advantages of the world are presented as a bait to corrupt nature, and groundless fears are raised in him of being reduced to poverty, which, by an immoderate pursuit after the world, he is tempted to guard against. If his natural constitution inclines him to resent injuries, Satan has always his instruments ready at hand to stir up his corruption and provoke him to wrath, by offering either real or supposed injuries; magnifying the former beyond their due bounds, or inferring the latter without duly considering the design of those whose innocent behaviour sometimes gives occasion to them, and, at the same time, overcharging his thoughts with them as though no expedient could be found to atone for them. If his natural constitution inclines him to sloth and inactivity, the difficulties of religion are set before him to discourage him from the exercise of that diligence which is necessary to surmount them. If, on the other hand, his natural temper leads him to be courageous and resolute, corrupt nature endeavours to make him self-confident, and thereby to weaken his trust in God. Or if he is naturally inclined to fear, something is offered to him which may tend to his discouragement, and to sink him into despair. These are the methods used by the flesh, when lusting against the spirit.

Let us next consider the opposition of the spirit to the flesh, or how the principle of grace in believers inclines them to make a stand against indwelling sin, which is called the lusting of the spirit against the flesh. The grace of God, when wrought in the heart in regeneration, is not an inactive principle; for it soon exerts itself, being excited by the power of the Spirit, who implanted it. There henceforth is, or ought to be, a constant opposition made by it to corrupt nature. This is the

case, not only as the believer, with unfeigned repentance, mourns on account of corrupt nature, and exercises that self-aborrence which the too great prevalence of it calls for; but as it leads him to implore help from God against it, by whose assistance he endeavours to subdue the corrupt motions of the flesh, or, as the apostle expresses it, to ‘mortify the deeds of the body,’^k that, in consequence, they may not be entertained, or prove injurious and destructive to him. Moreover, as there is something objective, as well as subjective, in this work, since the power of God never excites the principle of grace without presenting objects for it to be conversant about; so there are several things suggested to the soul which, if duly weighed and improved, are a means conducive to its being preserved from a compliance with the corrupt motions of indwelling sin. These are of a superior nature to those made use of by an enlightened conscience, in unregenerate persons, to prevent their committing the vilest abominations. Indeed, they are such—especially some of them—as, from the nature of the thing, can be used by none but those in whom the work of grace is begun. Accordingly, a believer considers not only the glorious excellencies and perfections of Christ, which he is now duly sensible of, as he is said to be precious to them that believe; but he is also affected with the manifold engagements which he has been laid under to love him, and to hate and oppose every thing which is contrary to his glory and interest. The love of Christ constraineth him; and therefore he abhors the thoughts of being so ungrateful and disingenuous as he would appear to be, should he fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The sense of redeeming love and grace is deeply impressed on his soul. He calls to mind how he has been quickened, effectually called, and brought into the way of peace and holiness; and therefore cannot entertain any thoughts of relapsing or returning again to folly. Here he considers the great advantage which he has received; which he would not lose on any terms. The delight which he has had in the ways of God and godliness, has been so great, that corrupt nature cannot produce any thing which may be an equivalent for the loss of it. He is very sensible that the more closely he has walked with God, the more comfortably he has walked. Besides, he looks forward, and, by faith, takes a view of the blessed issue of the life of grace, or of those reserves of glory which are laid up for him in another world; and he is, in consequence, inclined to cast the utmost contempt on every thing which has the least tendency to induce him to relinquish or abandon his interest in them.—Again, he considers and improves the bright examples which are set before him to encourage him to go on in the way of holiness; takes Christ himself for a pattern, endeavouring, so far as he is able, to follow him; walks as they have done who have not only stood their ground, but come off victorious in the conflict, and are reaping the blessed fruits and effects of victory. He also considers as an inducement to him to oppose the corrupt motions of the flesh, that he has by faith, as his own act and deed, in the most solemn manner, given up himself to Christ entirely, and without reserve, and professed his obligation to obey him in all things, and to avoid whatever has a tendency to displease him. He hence reckons that he is not his own, or at his own disposal, but Christ’s, whose he is, by a double right, not only as purchased by him, but as devoted and consecrated to him. He therefore says with the apostle, ‘How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’¹ He communes with himself to this effect: ‘I have given up my name to Christ; and I have not, since doing so, seen the least reason to repent of what I did. I have not found the least iniquity in him, neither has he been a hard master; but, on the other hand, he has expressed the greatest tenderness and compassion to me; and to his grace alone it is owing that I am what I am. Shall I, then, abandon his interest, or prove a deserter at last, and turn aside into the enemy’s camp? Is there any thing which can be proposed as a sufficient motive for my doing so?’ Such thoughts as these, through the prevailing influence of the principle of grace implanted and excited by the Spirit, are an effectual means to keep him from a sinful compliance with the motions of the flesh, and to excite him to make the greatest resistance against them.

We have thus considered the opposition which there is between the flesh and the

spirit, and how each of these prevails by turns. We might now observe the consequence of the victory obtained on either side. When grace prevails, all things tend to promote our spiritual peace and joy ; and we are fortified against temptations, and not only enabled to stand our ground, but made more than conquerors through him that loved us. But it is not always so with a believer. He sometimes finds that corrupt nature prevails ; and then many sad consequences follow, which not only occasion the loss of the peace and joy which he had before, but expose him to many troubles which render his life very uncomfortable.

The Consequences of the Prevailing Power of Indwelling Sin.

We are thus led to consider what are the consequences of the prevailing power of indwelling sin. When the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and God is pleased to withhold his grace, the soul is subjected to many evils. These are mentioned in the remaining part of this Answer.

1. A believer is foiled with temptation. Satan, by this means, gains ground against him, and pursues the victory which the flesh has obtained against the spirit. His conflicts are now doubled, arising, as the apostle expresses it, not only from 'flesh and blood,' but from 'the rulers of the darkness of this world.'^m His difficulties increase upon him ; his enemies are more insulting, and he less able to stand his ground against them ; his faith is weakened, and his fears are increasing, so that he is perpetually subject to bondage. Sometimes he is inclined to think that he shall one day fall, and that whatever he formerly thought he had gained will be lost by the assaults of his spiritual enemies. At other times he is disposed to question whether ever he had the truth of grace or not. In this case his spirit must needs be filled with the greatest perplexity, and almost overwhelmed within him. He is destitute of that boldness or liberty of access to the throne of grace, and that comfortable sense of his interest in Christ, which once he had ; and he finds it very difficult to recover those lively frames which he has lost, or to stand his ground against the great opposition made by corrupt nature, which still increases as faith grows weaker.

2. Another consequence of the power of indwelling sin, is the believer's falling into many sins. We are not to suppose, indeed, that he shall be so far left as to fall into a state of unregeneracy, or lose the principle of grace which was implanted in regeneration. Yet when this principle does not exert itself, and corrupt nature, on the other hand, is prevalent, it is hard to say how far he will run into the commission of known and wilful sins. As for sins of infirmity, they cannot be avoided, when we are in the best frame. But in this case we shall find a person committing presumptuous sins, so that if we were to judge of his state by his present frames, without considering the former experiences which he had of the grace of God, we should be ready to question whether his heart were right with God. Sins of omission generally follow. He cannot draw nigh to God with that frame of spirit which he once had, and therefore is ready to say, 'What profit should I have if I pray unto him ?'ⁿ and sometimes concludes that he contracts guilt by attempting to engage in holy duties. We may add, as is farther observed in this Answer, that he is hindered in all his spiritual services. Thus the apostle says, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.'^o He finds his heart disposed to wander from God, and his thoughts taken up with vanity. On this account it may be truly said, that his best works are not only imperfect, but defiled in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, and observes the various steps by which it treacherously departs from him. Nor can the believer find any way to recover himself till God is pleased to revive his work, take away the guilt which he has contracted, recover him out of the snare into which he has fallen, and so cause the work of grace again to flourish in the soul as it once did.

Practical Inferences from the Imperfect State of Believers.

We shall conclude with some inferences from what has been said concerning the

^m Eph. vi. 12.

ⁿ Job xxi. 15.

^o Rom. vii. 21.

imperfection of sanctification in believers, together with the reasons and consequences of it.

1. Since sinless perfection is not attainable in this life, we should take occasion to give a check to our censorious thoughts concerning persons or things, so as not to determine persons to be in an unconverted state, because they are chargeable with many sinful infirmities, which are not inconsistent with the truth of grace. Some abatements are to be made for their being sanctified but in part, and having the remnants of sin in them. Indeed, the greatest degree of grace which can be attained here, comes far short of that which the saints have arrived at in heaven. Accordingly, the difference between a believer and an unregenerate sinner does not consist in the one being perfect and the other imperfect; for when we consider the brightest characters given of any in scripture, their blemishes as well as their graces are recorded, so that none but our Saviour could challenge the world to convict or reprove them of sin. The apostle speaks of Elias, as 'a man subject to like passions as we are;' ^p and he might have spoken similarly of many others. Hence, when we are sensible of our own imperfections, we ought to inquire whether the spots we find in ourselves are like the spots of God's children? or whether our infirmities may be reckoned consistent with the truth of grace? Should we be able to draw a favourable conclusion, then, though it affords matter for humiliation that we are liable to any sinful failures or defects, it will be some encouragement to us, and matter of thanksgiving to God, that notwithstanding this our hearts are right with him.

That we may be, in some measure, satisfied as to this matter, we must distinguish between a person's being tempted to the greatest sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace, and his complying with the temptation. A temptation of this kind may offer itself; and, at the same time, grace may exert itself in an eminent degree, by the opposition which it makes to it, whether it arises from indwelling sin or from Satan.—Again, when we read of some sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace, such as those which the apostle speaks of, when he says that 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God,' ^q and elsewhere, that 'the fearful and unbelieving,' as well as those who are guilty of other notorious crimes, shall 'have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,' ^r we must distinguish between those who are guilty of these sins in a less degree than what is intended, when they are said to exclude from the kingdom of heaven; and others who are guilty of them, in a notorious degree, with greater aggravations. Thus unbelieving fears in those who are called to suffer for Christ's sake, if they do not issue in a denial of him, are not altogether inconsistent with the truth of grace, though they render a person guilty before God. The least degree of covetousness, in the same way, though it is not to be excused, does not exclude from the kingdom of heaven; but the prevailing love of the world, or the immoderate pursuit of it in those who use unlawful means to attain it, or have a rooted habitual desire after it more than after Christ, or put it in his room, is to be reckoned a mark of unregeneracy.—Further, we must distinguish between sinful infirmities, and allowed infirmities, or those who sin through surprise, being assaulted by an unforeseen temptation, when not on their guard, and those who commit the same sin with deliberation. The latter gives greater ground to fear that a person is in a state of unregeneracy than the former.—We must also distinguish between sins committed and repented of, with that degree of godly sorrow which is proportioned to their respective aggravations; and the same sins committed and continued in with impenitency. The latter gives ground to conclude that a person is in an unconverted state, though not the former. The difference arises not merely from the nature of the crimes, for we suppose the sins in themselves to be the same; but from other evidences which a person has or has not of his being in a state of grace.

2. From what has been said concerning the opposition which there is between natural conscience and corrupt nature in the unregenerate, we may infer that it is a great blessing to have a religious education, as it has a tendency to prevent many

enormities which others who are destitute of it run into. They who have had this privilege ought to bless God for it, and make a right improvement of it. But as those principles which take their rise from it are liable, unless the grace of God prevent, to be overcome and lost; let us press after something more than this, and be importunate with God, whose providence has favoured us thus far, that he would give us a better preservative against sin, or that its prevailing power may be prevented by converting grace.

3. From the opposition which corrupt nature makes in believers to the work of grace, we may infer that the standing of the best of men, or their not being chargeable with the greatest sins, is owing not so much to themselves as to the grace of God, by which we are what we are; that therefore the glory of our being preserved from such sins belongs entirely to him; that we have reason, when we are praying against our spiritual enemies, to beg that God would deliver us from the greatest of them, namely, ourselves; and that he who has a sovereignty over the hearts of all men, and can govern and sanctify their natural tempers and dispositions, would keep us from being drawn away by these; and that we ought to walk watchfully, and be always on our guard, depending on the grace of God for help, that indwelling sin may not so far prevail as to turn aside and alienate our affections from him.

4. From what has been said concerning the flesh and the spirit prevailing by turns, we infer the uncertainty of the frame of our spirits, and what changes we are liable to, with respect to the actings of grace or the comforts which result from it. This somewhat resembles the state of man as subject to various changes with respect to the dispensations of providence; sometimes lifted up, at other times cast down, and not abiding long in the same condition. Thus we are enabled at some times to gain advantage over indwelling sin, and enjoy the comforts which arise thence; at other times, when the flesh prevails, the acts of grace are interrupted, and its comforts almost, if not entirely, lost. What reason have we, therefore, to bless God that, though our graces are far from being brought to perfection, and our frames so various, yet he has given us ground to conclude that grace shall not wholly be lost, and that our state, as we are justified, is not liable to the same uncertainty, so that that which interrupts the progress of sanctification does not bring us into an unjustified state, or render us liable to condemnation?

5. From the inconveniences we sustain by the flesh prevailing against the spirit, as we are foiled by temptation, fall into sins, and are hindered in spiritual services, we infer the great hurt which sin does to those who are in a justified and sanctified state, as well as to those who are under the dominion of it. It is hence a vile and unwarrantable way of speaking to say, as some do, that because nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ, or bring those who are justified back again into an unjustified state, therefore sin can do them no hurt; as though all the consequences of the prevalency of corrupt nature, and the dishonour we bring to God, and the guilt we contract, could hardly be reckoned prejudicial. This is such a way of speaking as confutes itself in the opinion of all judicious and sober Christians.—Again, we might infer from the consequences of the prevalence of corruption, as we are liable hereby to be discouraged from duty or hindered in the performance of it, that we ought, if we find it thus with us, to take occasion to inquire whether some secret sin be not indulged and entertained by us, which gives occasion to the prevalence of corrupt nature, and for which we ought to be humbled. Or if we have lived in the omission of those duties which are incumbent on us, or have provoked God to leave us to ourselves, and so have had a hand in our present evils, we have occasion for great humiliation. And we ought to be very importunate with God for restoring grace, not only that our faith may not fail, but that we may be recovered out of the snare in which we are entangled, and may be brought off victorious over all our spiritual enemies.

PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE.

QUESTION LXXIX. *May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace?*

ANSWER. True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

General View of the Doctrine of Perseverance.

It is natural for persons, when they enjoy any blessing, to be solicitous about their retaining it; otherwise the pleasure which arises from it, if it is likely to be short and transitory, is rather an amusement than a solid and substantial happiness. The same may be said of those graces and privileges which believers are made partakers of, as the fruits and effects of the death of Christ. These are undoubtedly the most valuable blessings. It hence highly concerns us to inquire whether we may assuredly conclude that we shall not lose them, and so fail of that future blessedness which we have had so delightful a prospect of.

The saints' perseverance has been denied not only by many since the Reformation, and, in particular, by Papists, Socinians, and Remonstrants, but also by the Pelagians of old, and by all those whose sentiments bear some affinity to their scheme, or are derived from it. Indeed, when persons endeavour to establish the doctrines of conditional election, universal redemption, &c.; or when they explain the nature of human liberty so as to make the grace of God to be dependent on it for its efficacy in the beginning and carrying on of the work of conversion and sanctification; and accordingly assert, that the will has an equal power to determine itself to good or evil,—that the grace of God affords no other assistance to promote the one or guard against the other than what is objective, or, at least, than by supporting our natural faculties,—and, if there be any divine concurrence, that it consists only in what respects the external dispensations of providence, as a remote means conducive to the end, the event depending on our own conduct or disposition to improve these means; I say, when persons maintain these and similar doctrines, it is not to be wondered if we find them pleading for the possibility of a believer's falling totally and finally from the grace of God. They who have brought themselves into a state of grace, may apostatize or fall from it. If a man's free-will first inclined itself to exercise those graces which we call special, such as faith, repentance, love to God, &c., it follows that he may lose them and relapse to the contrary vices, and may plunge himself into the same depths of sin and misery whence he had escaped. According to this scheme, there may be, in the course of our lives, a great many instances of defection from the grace of God, and recovery to it, and finally, a drawing back unto perdition. Or if a person be so happy as to recover himself out of his last apostacy before he leaves the world, he is saved; otherwise, he finally perishes. This is a doctrine which some defend; but the contrary to it we shall endeavour to maintain, as being the subject insisted on in this Answer.

But before we proceed to the defence of it, it may not be amiss to premise something which may have, at least, a remote tendency to dispose us to receive conviction from the arguments which may be brought to prove it. We may consider that the contrary side of the question is in itself less desirable, if it could be defended. It is certain that the doctrine of the possibility of the saints falling from grace, tends very much to abate that delight and comfort which the believer has in the fore-views of the issue and event of his present state. It is a very melancholy thought to consider that he who has now advanced to the very borders of heaven, may be cast down into hell; that though he has at present an interest in the special and discriminating love of God, he may afterwards become the object of his hatred, so as never to behold his face with joy in a future world; that, though his feet are set upon a rock, his goings are not established; that, though he is walking in a plain and safe path, he may be ensnared, entangled, and fall, so as never to rise again; that though God is his friend, he may suffer him to fall into the

hands of his enemies, and be in consequence ruined and undone, as though his own glory were not concerned in his coming off victorious over them, or connected with the salvation of his people. Hence, as this doctrine renders the state of believers very precarious and uncertain, it tends effectually to damp their joys, and blast their expectations, and subject them to perpetual bondage; and it is a great hinderance to their offering praise and thanksgiving to God, whose grace is not so much magnified towards them as it would be, had they ground to conclude that the work which is now begun should certainly be brought to perfection. On the other hand, the doctrine which we are to maintain is in itself so very comfortable that, if we were at present in suspense concerning its truth, we cannot but desire that it may appear to be agreeable to the mind of God. It is certainly a very delightful thing for us to be assured, that what is at present well, shall end well; that they who are brought to believe in Christ, shall for ever abide with him; and that the work of grace which, at present, affords so fair and pleasing a prospect of its being at last perfected in glory, shall not miscarry. This will have a tendency to enhance our joy in proportion to the ground we have to conclude that the work is true and genuine; and it will excite our thankfulness to God, when we consider that he who is the author will also be the finisher of faith. It is certain, therefore, that this doctrine deserves confirmation.

We shall endeavour to establish our faith in it according to the following method:—First, we shall consider what we are to understand by persevering in grace, or falling from it. Secondly, we shall prove that the best believers would certainly fall from grace, were they left to themselves; so that their perseverance in grace is principally to be ascribed to the power of God, which keeps them through faith unto salvation. Thirdly, we shall consider what ground we have to conclude that the saints shall persevere in grace; and so explain and illustrate the several arguments insisted on in this Answer, and add some others taken from several scriptures by which this doctrine may be defended. Lastly, we shall endeavour to answer some objections which are generally brought against it.

Explanation of the Doctrine of Perseverance.

We shall consider what we are to understand by persevering in grace, or falling from it.

1. When we speak of a person as persevering in grace, we suppose that he has the truth of grace. We do not mean that a person may not fall away from a profession of faith; or that no one can lose that which we generally call common grace, which, in many things, bears a resemblance to that which is saving. We have already shown that there is a temporary faith whereby persons appear religious while their doing so comports with their secular interests; but when they are called by reason of persecution or tribulation, which may arise for the sake of the gospel, to forego their worldly interests, or quit their pretensions to religion, they fall away, or lose that grace which, as the evangelist says,^s they ‘seemed to have.’ We read of some whose hope of salvation is like the spider’s web, or the giving up of the ghost; but these are described not as true believers, but as hypocrites. It is beyond dispute that such may apostatize, and not only lay aside the external practice of some religious duties, but deny and oppose the doctrines of the gospel, which they once assented to the truth of.

2. It is certain that true believers may fall into very great sins; but yet they shall be recovered and brought again to repentance. We must distinguish, therefore, between their dishonouring Christ, disobeying his commands, and thereby provoking him to be angry with them; and their falling away totally from him. We formerly considered, when we proved that perfection is not attainable in this life, that the best men are sometimes chargeable with great failings and defects. Indeed, sometimes their sins are very heinously aggravated, their conversation in the mean while discovering that they are destitute of the actings of grace, and that to such a degree that they can hardly be distinguished from those who are in

an unregenerate state. It is hence one thing for a believer not to be able to put forth those acts of grace which he once did ; and another thing for him to lose the principle of grace. It would be a very preposterous thing to say, that, when David sinned in the matter of Uriah, the principle of grace exerted itself ; yet it was not wholly lost. It is not the same in this case as in the more common instances of the saints' infirmities, which they are daily chargeable with, and in which the conflict which there is between the flesh and the spirit appears ; for when corrupt nature exerts itself to such a degree as to lead persons to the commission of deliberate and presumptuous sins, they hardly appear at the time to be believers. Yet if we compare what they were before they fell, with what they shall be when brought to repentance, we may conclude that they did not, by their fall, bring themselves altogether into a state of unregeneracy.

3. It is beyond dispute that, as a believer may be destitute of the acts of grace, so he may lose the comforts of it, and sink into the depths of despair. Of this we have several instances recorded in scripture, which correspond with the experiences of many in our day. Thus the psalmist at one time says, that he was 'cast down,' and 'his soul disquieted within him.'^t At another time he says, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.' Elsewhere also he complains, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever ? will he be favourable no more ? is his mercy clean gone for ever ? doth his promise fail for evermore ? hath God forgotten to be gracious ? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?'^u Again, a believer is represented as being altogether destitute of a comfortable sense of the divine love, when complaining, 'Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead ? Shall the dead arise and praise thee ? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction ? Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.'^x It is certain, too, that when at any time he falls into very great sins, which seem inconsistent with a state of grace, he has no present evidence that he is a believer, and is never favoured with a comfortable sense of his interest in Christ. Nor is the joy of God's salvation restored to him, till he is brought unfeignedly to repent of his sin. Former experiences will not evince the truth of grace, while he remains impenitent. It is a bad sign when any one, who formerly appeared to have the truth of grace, but is now fallen into great sins, thinks himself to be in a state of grace, without the exercise of true repentance ; for his thinking so can be deemed little better than presumption. Yet God, whose mercy is infinitely above our deserts, will, in the end, recover him ; though, at present, he does not look like one of his children.

4. There are some who suppose that a believer may totally, though not finally, fall from grace. They hold this opinion because they conclude, as they have sufficient warrant to do from scripture, that believers shall not fall finally, inasmuch as the purpose of God concerning election must stand ; and that if they had not been chosen to salvation they would never have been brought into a state of grace. They suppose that persons, before they fell, were in a state of sanctification, and thus were partakers of a blessing which is inseparably connected with salvation. Hence, though they consider them, in their present state, as having lost the grace of sanctification, and so to have fallen totally ; yet they believe that they shall be recovered, and therefore not fall finally. Sanctification is Christ's purchase ; and where grace is purchased for any one, a price of redemption is paid for his deliverance from condemnation ; and consequently he shall be recovered and saved at last. though, at present, he is, according to their opinion, totally fallen. These suppose that, not only the acts of grace, but the very principle and the reason of it may be lost, because they cannot see how great and notorious sins, such as those committed by David, Peter, Solomon, and some others, can consist with a principle of grace. This opinion indeed cuts the knot of some difficulties which seem to attend the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, though falling into great sins. I think it may easily be proved, however, and we shall endeavour to do so, that be-

^t Psal. xlii. 5. and cxvi. 3

^u Psal. lxxvii. 7—9.

^x Psal. lxxxviii. 6, &c.

lievers shall be preserved from a total as well as from a final apostasy; or that, when they fall into great sins, they do not lose the principle of grace, though it be at the time inactive. This we shall take occasion to insist on more particularly under a following Head, when we consider the argument mentioned in this Answer for the proof of the doctrine of perseverance taken from the Spirit and seed of God abiding in a believer, as that which preserves him from a total as well as a final apostasy.

Perseverance the result of the Divine Power and Will.

We shall now consider that the best believers would certainly fall from grace, were they left to themselves; so that their perseverance in grace is principally to be ascribed to the power of God, which keeps them through faith unto salvation. This is particularly observed in this Answer; which lays down several arguments to prove the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace, and supposes that perseverance to be founded on God's power and will to maintain it. God is styled 'the preserver of men,'^y inasmuch as he upholds all things by the word of his power, so that independency on him is inconsistent with the idea of our being creatures; and we have no less ground to conclude that his power maintains the new creature, or that grace which took its rise from him. Should he fail or forsake us, we could not put forth the least act of grace, much less persevere in grace. When man at first came out of the hands of God, he was endowed with a greater ability to stand than any one, excepting our Saviour, has been favoured with since sin entered into the world; yet he apostatized, not from any necessity of nature, but by adhering to that temptation which he might have withstood. Then how unable is he to stand in his present state, having become weak, and, though brought into a state of grace, having been renewed and sanctified only in part, and having still the remains of corruption, which maintain a constant opposition to the principle of grace? Our perseverance in grace, therefore, cannot be owing to ourselves. Accordingly, the apostle ascribes it to a divine hand, when he says, 'we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'^z

A late celebrated writer, on the other side of the question,^a attempts to evade the force of this argument to prove the doctrine of perseverance, though, I think, without much strength of reasoning. He says that all who are preserved to salvation are kept by the power of God, but not that all believers are so kept. We reply, that all believers whose character answers that of the church to which the apostle writes, shall be saved, namely, all who are 'begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them;' whose 'faith,' after it has been tried, shall be 'found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'^b I say, these shall certainly be saved; and if all who are thus preserved to salvation are kept by the power of God, every thing is conceded which we contend for. But the writer referred to adds, that when they are said to be kept through faith, the meaning is, they are kept if they continue in the faith. Now, their continuance in the faith was put out of all dispute, by what is said concerning them in the words going before and following, as now referred to. Besides, the writer's argument amounts to no more than this; they shall be kept by the power of God, if they keep themselves; or they shall persevere if they persevere. To this argument I need make no reply.

But as our main design in this Head is not to prove that believers shall persevere, a point which we reserve to our next, but to show that whatever we assert concerning their perseverance takes its rise from God; we shall consider this as plainly contained in scripture. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the Lord's 'delivering him from every evil work, and preserving him to his heavenly kingdom.'^c The apostle Jude speaks of believers as 'sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called,' or as being first called, and then preserved by God the

^y Job vii. 20.

^b 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 7.

^z 1 Pet. i. 5.

^c 2 Tim. iv. 18. Jude verse 1.

^a See Whitby's discourse, &c. p. 463.

Father, through the intervention of Christ, our great Mediator, till they are brought to glory. And our Saviour, in his affectionate prayer for his church, a little before he left the world, says, ‘Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me.’^d These words not only prove that the perseverance of the saints is owing to God, but that the glory of his own name is concerned in it; so that it is not from ourselves, but from him. There is also a scripture in which our Saviour speaks of the perseverance of his ‘sheep’ in grace, and of his giving them eternal life; and he adds, ‘They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’^e It is owing, therefore, to his care, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, and to his power, which is superior to that of all those who attempt to destroy them, that they shall persevere in grace.

Proofs of the Doctrine of Perseverance.

We shall now consider what ground we have to conclude that the saints shall persevere in grace, and so explain and illustrate the arguments insisted on in this Answer, together with some others which may be taken from the sense of several scriptures, by which this doctrine may be defended.

1. ‘The saints’ perseverance in grace may be proved from the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and purpose, relating to their salvation, in which it is discovered and executed. That God loved them with a love of good-will, before they were inclined to express any love to him, is evident; because their love to him is assigned as the effect and consequence of his love to them, as the apostle says, ‘We love him because he first loved us.’^f The love of God to his people, therefore, must be considered as an immanent act; whence it follows, that it was from eternity, since all God’s immanent acts are eternal. This is particularly expressed by the prophet when he says, ‘The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.’^g Were this language meant of a love that shall never have an end, it would plainly prove the doctrine we are defending; but as the words which immediately follow, ‘Therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,’ seem to intimate that the love is that which was from everlasting, his drawing them or bringing them into a converted state being the result of it, it follows that this everlasting love is the same as his eternal purpose or design to save them. Now, if there be such an eternal purpose relating to their salvation, it necessarily infers their perseverance; and that there was such a design in God was proved under a former Answer.^h Besides, they who are the objects of this eternal purpose of grace are frequently described in scripture as believers, inasmuch as faith and salvation are inseparably connected together. Hence, the execution of God’s purpose in giving faith, necessarily infers the execution of it in saving those who believe. That the purpose of grace is unchangeable, was formerly proved;ⁱ and may be farther argued from what the apostle says concerning ‘the immutability of his counsel,’ shown to ‘the heirs of promise,’ as the ground of that ‘strong consolation’ which they have ‘who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.’^k Now, if God cannot change his purpose relating to the salvation of believers, it necessarily follows that they shall certainly attain salvation, and consequently shall persevere in grace.

It will be objected that, though God may be said to love his people while they retain their integrity, yet they may provoke him by their sins to cast them off; so that the present exercise of divine love to them is no certain argument that it shall be extended to the end, or that, by virtue of it, he will enable them to persevere, and then bring them to glory. Now, we do not deny that believers, by their sins, may so far provoke God, that, if he should mark their iniquities, or deal with them according to the demerit of them, he would cast them off for ever. Still he will not do this, because his doing it would be inconsistent with his purpose to recover them from their backslidings, and forgive their iniquities. Moreover, it cannot be denied

d John xvii. 11.

e Chap. x. 28.

f 1 John iv. 19.

g Jer. xxxi. 3.

h See Quest. xii, xiii.

i See Sect. ‘The Eternity, Wisdom, Unchangeableness of the Purposes of Election,’ under Quest. xii, xiii. and Sect. ‘The immutability of God,’ under Quest. ix, x, xi.

k Heb. vi. 17, 18.

that, notwithstanding God's eternal love to them, there are many instances of his hatred and displeasure expressed in the external dispensations of his providence, which are as often changed as their conduct towards him is changed. But this fact does not infer a change in God's purpose. He may testify his displeasure against them, or, as the psalmist expresses it, 'visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes;'¹ and yet he cannot change his resolution to save them, but will, by some methods of grace, recover them from their backslidings, and enable them to persevere in grace, since 'his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.'

2. Another argument to prove the saints' perseverance, may be taken from the covenant of grace, and the many promises respecting their salvation which are contained in it. That this may appear, let it be considered that, as was observed under a former Answer,^m Christ was appointed to be the head of this covenant. Accordingly, there was an eternal transaction between the Father and him, in which all things relating to the everlasting salvation of the elect, whom he therein represented, were stipulated in their behalf. In this covenant, God the Father promised, not only that Christ should 'have a seed to serve him,'ⁿ but that he 'should see his seed,' that 'the pleasure of the Lord,' with relation to them, 'should prosper in his hand,' and that he should 'see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied,'^o which implies that he should see the fruits and effects of all that he had done and suffered for them in order to their salvation. Nor is this said respecting some of them, but respecting all; and it could not have had its accomplishment, were it possible for them not to persevere in grace.

Again, in this covenant Christ has undertaken to keep them, as the result of his becoming a surety for them; in doing which, he not only engaged to pay the debt of obedience and sufferings which was due from them, which he has already done, but that he would work all that grace in them which he purchased by his blood. Now, he has already begun this work in them; though it is not yet accomplished. Can we suppose, then, that he will not bring it to perfection, or that he will not enable them to endure to the end, that they may be saved? This would argue the greatest unfaithfulness in him, who is styled 'faithful and true.' Moreover, as there are engagements on Christ's part relating to this matter, and as, in pursuance of these, they are said to be in his hand; so the Father has given them an additional security, that they shall be preserved from apostacy. They are hence said to be also 'in his hand,' whence 'none can pluck them out;' and it is thence argued that 'they shall never perish.'^p We may observe, too, that the life which Christ is said to give them is not only the beginning of life, in the first grace which they are made partakers of in conversion, but is called 'eternal life,' which certainly denotes the completing of the work of grace in their everlasting salvation.

Further, the promises contained in the covenant of grace, relate not only to their sanctification here, but to their salvation hereafter. On this account it is called 'an everlasting covenant,' and the mercies of it, 'the sure mercies of David;'^q that is, either those mercies which David, who had an interest in this covenant, was given to expect, or mercies which Christ had engaged to purchase and bestow, who is here, as elsewhere,^r called David, inasmuch as David was an eminent type of him, as well as because he was his seed according to the flesh. That the latter is the more probable sense of the two, appears from the following words, in which he is said to be 'given for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' Now, if these mercies are in Christ's hand to be applied, it is no wonder that they are styled 'sure mercies.' We might here consider the covenant of grace as containing all the promises which respect the beginning, carrying on, or completing of the salvation of his people. These relate, not only to what God will do for them, but to what he will enable them to be and do, in those things which concern their faithfulness to him; whereby they have the highest security that they shall behave themselves as becomes a covenant-people. Thus he assures them that he will be to them a God, that is, that he will glorify his divine perfections in bestowing

1 Psal. lxxxix. 32.

o Isa. liii. 10, 11.

11.

m See Quest. xxxi.

p John x. 28, 29.

q Isa. lv. 3 4.

Y

n Psal. xxii. 30.

r Hos. iii. 5.

on them the special and distinguishing blessings of the covenant; and that they shall be to him a people, that is, shall so behave themselves that they shall not, by apostacy from him, oblige him to disown his relation to them or exclude them from his covenant. He has encouraged them to expect, not only those great things which he would do for them provided they yielded obedience to his law, but also that he would 'put his law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,' whereby they might be disposed to obey him. And when he says that they 'shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord,' he gives them to understand that they should not only teach or instruct one another in the knowledge of God, which respects their being favoured with the external means of grace, but that they 'should all know him, from the least of them unto the greatest.' This denotes that they should have, not only a speculative knowledge of divine truth, but a saving knowledge of it, such as is inseparably connected with 'life eternal.'^s That this knowledge is intended appears from its being accompanied with or flowing from forgiveness of sin; for it is immediately added, 'I will forgive their iniquity,' and this is expressed with a peculiar emphasis. Now, their enjoying forgiveness of sins, connected with a saving knowledge of divine truth, is certainly inconsistent with their falling from a justified state, especially as it is said, 'I will remember their sin no more.'^t Elsewhere, also, when God speaks of his 'making an everlasting covenant' with his people,^u he promises that 'he will not turn away from them to do them good;' and, inasmuch as they are prone, by reason of the deceitfulness of their hearts, to turn aside from him, he adds, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' Here it is not only said that he will not turn from them, if they fear him; but he gives them security in this covenant, that they shall fear him. Can we conclude, then, that they, in whom this covenant is so far made good that God has put his fear in their hearts, which is supposed in their being believers, shall not attain the other blessing promised, namely, that of their not departing from him? Moreover, the stability of this covenant, as a foundation of the saints' perseverance, is set forth by a metaphor, taken from the most fixed and stable parts of nature; and it is said to exceed these in stability, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.'^x

The principal objection which is brought to enervate the force of the argument taken from those promises of the covenant which respect the saints' perseverance, is, that either these promises are to be considered as conditional, and the conditions of them as not fulfilled, in which case they are not obligatory, so that God is not bound to give salvation to those to whom he has promised it on these conditions; or else they are to be considered as made to a political body, namely, the Jewish nation, in which case they respect, not their eternal salvation, but only some temporal deliverances of which they were to be made partakers, and which belonged to them generally as a church,—everlasting salvation never being considered as a blessing which shall be applied to whole nations, how much soever a whole nation may partake of the common gifts of divine bounty which are bestowed in this world.—In answer to this objection, in both its branches, I need only refer to what has been said elsewhere. As to the former branch of it, we have endeavoured to show how those scriptures are to be understood which are laid down in a conditional form, without supposing that they militate against the absoluteness of God's purpose, or its unchangeableness, and independency on the conduct of men.^y As to the latter branch of it, what has been said in answer to an objection of a similar nature, brought against the doctrine of election by Dr. Whitby, and others, who suppose that the blessings which the elect are said in scripture to be made partakers of respect the nation of the Jews or the church in general, and not a particular number chosen out of them to salvation, and that the promises which are directed to them are only such as they were given to expect as a church or political body of men, may well be applied to our present pur-

^s John xvii. 3.

^x Isa. liv. 10.

^t Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

^y See vol. i. pages 289—292. *et alibi passim.*

^u Chap. xxxii. 40.

pose, and serve as an answer to this objection.² In this place, therefore, I shall add but a few remarks by way of reply.

If any expressions are annexed to the promises of the covenant which give occasion to some to conclude that they are conditional, we must take heed that we do not understand them as denoting the dependence of God's determinations on the arbitrary will of man; as though his purpose relating to the salvation of his people were indeterminate, and it were a matter of doubt with him, as well as with us, whether he should fulfil it or not, because it is uncertain whether the conditions of it shall be performed. To suppose this is inconsistent with the divine perfections. But if, on the other hand, we suppose that the grace or duty annexed to the promise must have some idea of a condition contained in it, this may be understood according to the tenor of God's revealed will, as denoting nothing else but a condition of our expectation, or of our claim to the blessing promised; and then nothing can be inferred from it, but that some who lay claim to or expect salvation, without performing the condition of it, may apostatize, and miss it; which does not in the least militate against the doctrine we are defending. We may add that, when such a condition is annexed to a promise, (for I will not decline to call it so in the sense just stated,) and there is another promise added, in which God engages that he will enable his people to perform it, the condition is then equivalent to an absolute promise. Of this kind are those conditions which are mentioned in the scriptures formerly referred to. When God promises that he will be a God to his people, that he will forgive their iniquities, and never reverse the sentence of forgiveness, or remember their sins any more, and that he will never turn away from them to do them good, he, at the same time, promises that he will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and put his fear in their hearts, and so enable them to behave themselves as his people, or to be to him a people. When, again, God sets forth the stability of his covenant, and intimates that it should not be removed, he adds that his kindness shall not depart from them. Nor does this kindness respect merely some temporal blessings which he would bestow upon them, but his extending that grace to them which should keep them faithful to him. Hence, he says that 'in righteousness they should be established;' words which contain a promise that he would maintain grace in them, without which they could hardly be said to be established in righteousness, as well as that he would perform the other things promised to them in this covenant.

The other branch of the objection we are examining, considers that the promises are given to the church in general, or to the Jews as a political body of men; and that they cannot be supposed to respect their everlasting salvation, but only some temporal blessings which they should enjoy. Now, this point is to be determined by the express words contained in the promise. If God tells those to whom the promises are made that he will do that for them which includes more than the blessings which they are supposed to enjoy of a temporal nature, we are not to conclude that there is nothing of salvation referred to in them, when the words thus seem to imply the contrary. Besides, though these promises are said to be given to the Jews as a political body of men, and there are some circumstances in them which have an immediate and particular relation to that people; yet the promises of special grace and salvation were to be applied only by those among them who believed. Moreover, the same promises are to be applied by believers in all ages; else we must understand the texts which contain them as only an historical relation of things which do not belong to us,—an interpretation which would tend very much to detract from the spirituality and usefulness of many parts of scripture. To make this appear, we might consider some promises which, when first made, had a particular relation to God's dealings with his people in the circumstances in which they were then placed, but which are, notwithstanding, applied in a more extensive manner to New Testament believers in all ages. Thus, when God says to his people, in the scripture formerly referred to, 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord,'^a whatever respect the promise may have to the church of the Jews, our Saviour applies it in a more extensive way, as belonging to believers in all

² See Sect. 'The Meaning of Election,' under Quest. xii, xiii.

^a Isa. liv. 13.

ages, when he says, 'Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.'^b Again, God promises Joshua that 'he would not fail nor forsake him,' and encourages him thereby 'not to fear nor be dismayed,'^c when he was to pass over Jordan into the land of Canaan, and afterwards to engage in a work which was attended with many difficulties. Now, this promise is applied by the apostle as an inducement to believers in his day to be 'content with such things as they have;' for after exhorting them to be so, he adds, that what God told Joshua of old was written for their encouragement, namely, that 'he would never leave them, nor forsake them.'^d We cannot therefore but conclude, that the objection we have been considering is of no force in either of its branches to overthrow the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, as founded on the stability of the promises of the covenant of grace.

3. The saints' perseverance in grace may be farther proved from their inseparable union with Christ. Not only is this union federal, as he is the head of the covenant of grace, and they his members, whose salvation, as was observed under the last Head, he has engaged to bring about; but he may be considered also as their vital head, from whom they receive spiritual life and influence; so that as long as they abide in him, their spiritual life is maintained as derived from him. If we consider the church, or the whole election of grace as united to him, it is called 'his body,'^e 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all;'^f and every believer being a member of this body, or a part, if I may so express it, of this fulness, if it should perish and be separated from him, his body would be defective, and he would sustain a loss of that which is an ingredient in his fulness. Moreover, as this union includes that relation between Christ and his people which is, by a metaphorical way of speaking, styled conjugal,^g and accordingly is mutual, as the result of his becoming theirs by an act of grace, and they his by an act of self-dedication; so it is the foundation of mutual love, which is abiding. The love is certainly abiding on his part; because it is unchangeable, as founded on a covenant engagement which he cannot violate; and though their love to him is in itself subject to change through the prevalency of corrupt nature, which too much inclines them to be unsteady in this marriage covenant, yet he will recover and bring them back to him. He will not deal with them as persons do with strangers, whom they exclude from their presence or favour, if they render themselves unworthy of it; but as persons who stand in a nearer relation to him, and accordingly are the objects of his special love, and shall not be cast off for ever, how much soever he may resent their unworthy behaviour to him. Not to be separate from Christ, is, according to the apostle's expression, not to 'be separated from his love;' and this, he says, he was 'persuaded' he should not be. 'I am persuaded,' says he, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'^h Accordingly it is said, that Christ 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'ⁱ

Here I cannot but take notice of a very jejune and empty sense which some give of this text, to evade the force of the argument taken from it to prove the doctrine we are maintaining. By 'his own' they mean no other than Christ's disciples, whom he was at the time conversant with. Indeed, they apply whatever Christ says, in some following chapters, to them, exclusive of all others. When, for example, he says, 'Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world;'^k and 'Because I live, ye shall live also;'^l they suppose that he speaks of them in particular. So, in interpreting the text before us, they understand the clause, 'having loved his own which were in the world,' to mean his own disciples, as though he had a propriety in none but them; and the clause 'he loved them to the end,' to mean, not to the end of their lives, for that would prove the doctrine we are maintaining, but to the end of his life, which was now at hand; and his love to them, they suppose to be expressed in his condescending to wash their feet. But

^b John vi. 45.

^c Josh. i. 5, 6.

^d Heb. xiii. 5.

^e Col. i. 24.

^f Eph. i. 23.

^g See pages 3, 4.

^h Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

ⁱ John xiii. i.

^k Chap. xv. 19.

^l Chap. xiv. 19.

if this were the sense of the words, his love to them would not be so extraordinary a privilege as it really is; for it would be only an instance of human and not divine love. Indeed, our happiness consists, not only in Christ's loving us to the end of his life, but in his continuing to express his love in his going into heaven to prepare a place for us, in his there making continual intercession on our behalf, and in his coming again in the end, to receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also.

4. The saints' perseverance farther appears from Christ's continual intercession for them. This was particularly explained under a foregoing Answer.^m The apostle, speaking of his 'ever living to make intercession' for his people, infers that 'he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'ⁿ But this Christ could not be said to do, should he leave the work which he has begun in them imperfect, and suffer those who come to him by faith, to apostatize from him. We formerly considered Christ's intercession as including his appearing in the presence of God, in behalf of those for whom he offered himself a sacrifice while on earth. We considered also that what he intercedes for shall certainly be granted him, not only because he is the Son of God in whom he is well-pleased, but because he pleads his own merits, and because to deny him what he merited, would be, in effect, to deny the sufficiency of his sacrifice, as though the purchase had not been fully satisfactory. We must conclude, therefore, as he himself said on earth, that 'the Father heareth him always.' It is also evident that he prays for the perseverance of his people. He says to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'^o And there are many things in the affectionate prayer, mentioned in John xvii., which he put up to God immediately before his last sufferings, which respect his people's perseverance in grace. Thus he says, 'Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ;'^p and, 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil ;'^q that is, either that he would keep them from the evil which often attends the condition in which they are in the world, that so the work of grace may not suffer, at least not miscarry thereby; or that he would keep them from the evil one, that so they may not be brought again under his dominion. He also prays 'that they may be made perfect in one ;'^r that is, not only that they may be perfectly joined together in the same design, but that their unanimity may continue till they are brought to a state of perfection, and 'that the world may know that God has loved them, even as he has loved Christ.' Moreover, he declares his *will*; which shows that his intercession is founded on justice, and accordingly is of the nature of a demand, rather than of a supplication for what might be given or denied, and his 'will' is, 'that they whom the Father has given him may be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory.'^s Now, all these expressions are very inconsistent with the supposition, that it is possible that they whom he thus intercedes for may apostatize, or fall short of salvation.

It is objected by some, that this prayer respects none but his disciples, who were his immediate friends and followers, and not believers in all ages and places in the world. But the contrary is evident from several things which are mentioned in it. For instance, he says, that 'the Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he hath given him.'^t The sense of these words will sink too low, if we suppose that he intends, 'Thou hast given me power to dispose of all persons and things in this world, that I may give eternal life to that small number which thou hast given me, namely, my disciples.' He obviously speaks of that universal dominion which he has over all persons and things, which were committed to him with the view that all those who were put into his hand to be redeemed and saved, should attain eternal life. Again, he says, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.'^u Did Christ manifest the divine name and glory to none but those who were his disciples; and were there none but they who had kept his word? Moreover, when he says that they whom he prayed for are the Father's, and adds, 'All mine are thine, and

^m See vol. i. Quest. lv.

ⁿ Heb. vii. 25.

^o Luke xxii. 32.

^p John xvii. 11.

^q John xvii. 15.

^r Verse 23.

^s Verse 24.

^t Verse 2.

^u Verse 6.

thine are mine, and I am glorified in them,'^x is the number of those whom Christ has a right to, and the Father has set apart for himself, in whom he would show forth his glory as the objects of his love, and in whom Christ as Mediator was to be glorified, so small that it included only the eleven disciples? Or, does it not rather respect all who have believed, or shall believe, from the beginning to the end of time? And again, when he speaks of 'the world hating them, because they are not of the world,'^y and of their being exposed to the evils which are in the world, or the assaults of Satan who is their avowed enemy; is this applicable only to the disciples? And when he says, 'Neither pray I for these alone,' that is, for those who now believe, 'but for them also which shall believe';^z does it not plainly intimate that he had others in view besides his disciples? These, and several other passages in this prayer, are a sufficient evidence that there is no weight in the objection, to overthrow the argument we are maintaining.

5. Believers' perseverance in grace may be proved from the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them. When they were regenerated, it was by the power of the Holy Ghost, as condescending to come and take up his abode in them. Thus we often read of their being acted by, and under the influence of the Holy Ghost, who is said to dwell where he is pleased to display his divine power and glory; and if these displays are internal, then he dwells in the heart. Our Saviour speaks of him as 'another Comforter' given, 'that he may abide' with his people 'for ever.'^a This indwelling of the Spirit is very distinct from that extraordinary dispensation which the church had, when they were favoured with inspiration; for the apostle speaks of it as a privilege peculiar to believers as such: 'Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'^b The meaning of these words cannot be that those have no interest in Christ who have not the extraordinary *afflatus* of the Spirit, such as the prophets had. We must suppose, therefore, that the privilege spoken of is one which believers have in all ages. Now, if the Spirit is pleased to condescend thus to take up his abode in the soul, and that for ever, he will certainly preserve it from apostasy. We may add, that there are several fruits and effects of the Spirit's dwelling in the soul, which afford an additional proof of this doctrine. Thus believers are said to have 'the first-fruits of the Spirit';^c that is, they have those graces wrought in them which are the beginning of salvation; and as the first-fruits are a part of the harvest which will follow, these are the foretastes of the heavenly blessedness which God would never have bestowed upon them had he not designed to preserve them from apostasy. Moreover, believers are said to be 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance.'^d The earnest, as given by men, is generally deemed a part of payment; and upon any receiving it, they are satisfied that they shall, at last, receive the full reward. And shall believers miss of the heavenly blessedness, who have such a glorious pledge and earnest of it? Again, if we consider 'the Spirit' as 'bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;' and that 'they shall be glorified together' with him;^e is this testimony invalid, or not to be depended on? Yet it could not be depended on were it possible for them to fall from a state of grace.

This testimony, as will be observed under the next Answer, is what we depend very much upon, in order to our attaining assurance that we are in a state of grace, and that we shall persevere in it. At present, we shall take it for granted that there is such a thing as assurance, or that this blessing is attainable. The use which I would make of this supposition to maintain our present argument, is, that the Spirit's having any hand in working or encouraging this hope that we have of the truth of grace, and consequently that we shall persevere in it to salvation, argues that the hope is warrantable, and not delusive; for he who is the author or giver of it cannot deceive our expectation, or put us upon looking for that which is not a reality. It hence follows that it is impossible

x John xvii. 9, 10.
b Rom. viii. 9.

y Verses 14, 15.
c Verse 23.

z Verse 20.
d Eph. i. 13 14.

a Chap. xiv. 16.
e Rom. viii. 16, 17.

that they should apostatize to whom 'God has given' this 'good hope through grace,' so that they should fail of that 'everlasting consolation,' which is connected with it.^f This consequence will hardly be denied by those who are on the other side of the question; and we may observe, that they who oppose the doctrine of perseverance, always deny that of assurance, especially as proceeding from the testimony of the Spirit. Yet that we may not be misunderstood, we do not say, that every one who has a strong persuasion that he shall be saved, shall be saved; for such a persuasion is no other than enthusiasm. But our argument, in short, is, that if there is a witness of the Spirit to the truth of grace which cannot be charged with enthusiasm, then the doctrine we are maintaining is undeniably true. This will more evidently appear from what will be said in defence of the doctrine of assurance under our next Answer.

We proceed, therefore, to the other branch of the argument we have mentioned to prove this doctrine, namely, that believers have the seed of God abiding in them. This is founded on what the apostle says in 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' For understanding this, let us consider that, by the words 'he cannot commit sin,' the apostle does not intend that such a one is not a sinner, or that there is such a thing as sinless perfection attainable in this life; for that is contrary, not only to the whole tenor of scripture and daily experience of mankind, but to what he had expressly said, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'^g In this text he is doubtless speaking of persons committing sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace: as he says, in a foregoing verse, 'Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.'^h The sin he speaks of is such as argues a person to be in a state of unregeneracy. Accordingly, when he says, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil,'ⁱ he certainly speaks of such a commission of sin as argues us to be under the reigning power of the devil. That this may plainly appear to be his meaning, we may observe that he elsewhere distinguishes between 'a sin that is unto death,' and a sin that is 'not unto death.'^k Here he does not mean, as the Papists suppose, that some sins deserve eternal death, and others not; the former of which they call mortal sins, the latter venial. But he is speaking of a sin which is inconsistent with the principle of grace, and the sin which is consistent with it. The former is sometimes called 'the pollution that is in the world through lust;'^l the latter, 'the spot of God's children.'^m The least sin deserves death, though they who commit it shall not perish, but be brought to repentance; but the 'sin unto death' is wilful sin, committed and continued in with impenitency; and with this limitation we are to understand the apostle's words, 'He who is born of God doth not commit sin.'

We shall now consider the reason assigned why the person he speaks of cannot in this sense commit sin, namely, he is 'born of God,' and 'the seed of God abideth in him.' To be born of God is what is elsewhere styled regeneration, or being born of the Spirit: in which there is a principle of grace implanted, which is here called 'the seed of God.' Indeed, this metaphorical way of speaking is very expressive of the thing intended. For as in nature the seed produces fruit, and in things moral the principle of action produces action, as the principle of reason produces acts of reason; so in things spiritual, the principle of grace produces acts of grace; and this principle being from God, which has been largely proved under a foregoing Answer,ⁿ it is here called 'the seed of God.' Now, this seed of God, or this principle, is not merely said to be in the believer, as that which for the present is the ground of spiritual actions; but it is said to 'remain in him.' As, elsewhere, Christ speaks of the Spirit as 'abiding' with his people 'for ever;'^o so here the apostle speaks of the principle of grace wrought by the Spirit as abiding, that is, continuing for ever. He hence infers that a believer 'cannot sin.' If he had been speaking only of its being implanted, but not abiding, all that could be inferred would be that he does not sin. But as he argues that he cannot sin, that is, apostatize, we must understand that the principle abides in him continually. Now, this

^f 2 Thess. ii. 16.

^g 1 John i. 8.

^h Chap. iii. 6.

ⁱ Ver. 8.

^k Chap. v. 16, 17.

^l 2 Pet. i. 4.

^m Deut. xxxii. 5.

ⁿ See Sect. 'Effectual Calling a Divine Work,' under Quest. lxvii, lxviii.

^o John xiv. 16.

plainly amounts to the argument we are maintaining, namely, that because the seed of God abides in a believer, he cannot apostatize or fall short of salvation.

They who are on the other side of the question seem to find it very difficult to evade the force of this argument. Some suppose that the apostle intends no more than that he who is born of God should not commit sin. But this interpretation is not only remote from the sense of the words ‘cannot sin,’^p but does not sufficiently distinguish one who is born of God from another who is not so; for it is as much a truth that an unregenerate person ought not to sin, as that a regenerate person ought not to do so. Others suppose the apostle to mean that believers sin with difficulty, or are hardly brought to commit sin. But as this also does not answer to the sense of the words ‘cannot sin,’ so it is inconsistent with that beautiful gradation which we may observe in the words. To say that the believer does not sin, and then if he commits sin it is with some difficulty, does not correspond with the climax which the apostle makes use of when he says he does not commit sin, yea, he cannot. Others suppose the apostle’s meaning is, that he who is born of God cannot sin unto death, or apostatize so as to fall short of salvation, so long as he makes a right use of the principle of grace which is implanted in him; but that, by opposing and afterwards extinguishing it, he may become an apostate. But we may observe that the apostle attributes his perseverance in grace, not to his making use of the principle, but to his having it, or to its abiding in him. And he sufficiently guards against the supposition of its being possible that the principle of grace may be wholly lost; for then this seed could not be said to abide in him, nor would the inference deduced from its abiding in him, namely, that he cannot sin, be just.

We have thus considered the latter branch of the present argument to prove the saints’ perseverance in grace, taken from the seed of God abiding in believers. But there is one thing which must be observed before I dismiss this Head, namely, that the principle of grace, which is signified by this metaphor, though it exists and abides in a believer, does not always exert itself so as to produce those acts of grace which would otherwise proceed from it. This cannot be better illustrated than by a similitude taken from the soul, which is the principle of reason in man. Though it is as much the principle of reason in an infant in the womb as it is in any, yet it is altogether inactive; for most allow that infants have not the exercise of thought or acts of reason. And when a person is newly born, it hardly appears that this principle is deduced into act; and in those in whom it has been deduced into act, it may, through the influence of some bodily disease with which it is affected, be rendered stupid and almost inactive, or at least so disordered that the actions which proceed from it cannot be styled rational. Yet still it remains a principle of reason. The same may be said concerning the principle of grace. It is certainly an inactive principle in those who are regenerate from the womb; and it may cease to exert itself, and be with equal reason styled an inactive principle in believers, when they fall into very great sins to which it offers no resistance. This we shall take occasion to apply under a following Head, when we shall consider some objections which are brought against this doctrine by those who suppose that believers, when sinning presumptuously, as David, Peter, and others, are said to have done, fell totally, though not finally. There was indeed a total suspension of the activity of this principle, but yet the principle itself was not wholly lost. But more of this in its proper place. We are bound to conclude, therefore, that because this principle abides in believers, they can neither totally nor finally apostatize,—that they can neither fall from a state of grace, nor fail at last of salvation.

We have thus endeavoured to explain and show the force of those arguments which are contained in this Answer, to prove the doctrine of the saints’ perseverance. There are several others which might have been insisted on. In particular, the doctrine may be proved from the end and design of Christ’s death; which was, not only that he might purchase to himself a peculiar people, but that he might purchase eternal life for them. We cannot think that this invaluable price would have been given for the procuring of that which should not be applied; for in this view Christ would be said to die in vain. When a person gives a price for any

p The words are *ου δυναται αμαρτανιν*.

thing, it is with the design that he, or they for whom he purchased it, should be put into the possession of it; and if this be not done, the price which was given is reckoned lost, and the person who gave it disappointed. This argument may be considered as having still more weight, if we observe that the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed, redounds not only to their happiness, but to the glory of God the Father, and of Christ our great Redeemer. God the Father, in giving Christ to be a propitiation for sin, designed to bring more glory to his name than by all his other works. Accordingly, our Saviour appeals to him in the close of his life, ‘I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’^q The work was his; there was a revenue of glory which he expected by it; and this glory did not consist only in his receiving a full satisfaction for sin, that so he might take occasion to advance his grace in forgiving it, but it consisted also in his people being enabled to ‘bear much fruit.’^r The glory of God the Father, therefore, is advanced by the application of redemption, and consequently by bringing his redeemed ones to perfection. The Son is also glorified, not merely by his having those honours which his human nature is advanced to as the consequence of his finishing the work of redemption, but by the application of redemption to his people. Accordingly, he is said to be ‘glorified in them,’^s that is, his mediatorial glory is rendered illustrious by all the grace which is conferred upon them. Certainly, therefore, he will be eminently glorified, when they are brought to be with him, where he is, to behold his glory. Now, can we suppose that, since the Father and the Son designed to have so great a glory redound to them by the work of our redemption, they will sustain any loss of it for want of the application of it to those for whom it was purchased? If God designed, as the consequence of the work of redemption, that the saints should sing that new song, ‘Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;’ and if God the Father, and the Son, are joined together, and their glory celebrated in this song, by the redeemed ascribing ‘blessing, honour, glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever,’^t then certainly they will not lose this glory, and the saints shall be brought into that state where they shall have occasion thus to praise and adore them. If it be objected that God the Father, and the Son, will be glorified, though many of his saints should apostatize, and so the death of Christ be to no purpose with respect to them, because all shall not apostatize, the answer is plain and easy,—that though he could not be said to lose the glory he designed by the salvation of those who persevere, yet some branches of his glory would be lost by reason of the apostasy of others who fall short of salvation; and it is a dishonour to him to suppose that he will lose the least branch of it, or that any of those for whom Christ died should be for ever lost. We might add, that for the same reason that we suppose one whom Christ has redeemed should be lost, all might be lost; and so he would lose all the glory he designed to have in the work of redemption. This appears from the fact that all are liable to those temptations which, if complied with, have a tendency to ruin them. All are supposed to be renewed and sanctified only in part; so that the work of grace meets with those obstructions from corrupt nature which would certainly prove too hard for all our strength, and baffle our utmost endeavours to persevere, did not God appear in our behalf, and keep us by his power. Now, if all need strength from him to stand, and must say that without him they can do nothing, we must either suppose that that grace is given to all saints which shall enable them to persevere, or else that it is given to none. If it be given to none, and all are left to themselves, then that which overthrows the faith of one, would overthrow the faith of all; and we might conclude that whatever God the Father or the Son have done, in order to the redemption and salvation of the elect, might be of none effect.

I might produce many other arguments in defence of the saints’ perseverance; but shall conclude this Head with two or three scriptures, whereby the truth of that doctrine will farther appear. Thus our Saviour says to the woman of Sama-

^q John xvii. 4.

^r Chap. xv. 8.

^s Chap. xvii. 10.

^t Rev. v. 9. compared with 13.

ria, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'^u Here, by the water which Christ gives, is doubtless understood the gifts and graces of the Spirit. These are not like the waters of a brook, which often deceive the expectation of the traveller; but they are 'a well of water,' intimating that a believer shall have a constant supply of grace and peace, till he is brought to the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand, and is made partaker of eternal life.—Again, our Saviour says, 'He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life;'^x that is, it is as surely his as if he were in the actual possession of it. He farther intimates, too, that those who believe in him are not only justified for the present, but shall not come into condemnation. Now, this certainly implies that their salvation is so secure that it is impossible for them to perish eternally.—Another scripture which plainly proves this doctrine, is 2 Tim. ii. 19: 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' In these words the apostle encourages the church to hope for perseverance in grace, after they had had a sad instance of two persons of note, namely, Hymeneus and Philetus, who had not only 'erred from the truth,' but 'overthrown the faith of some;'^y and he cautions all who make a profession of religion, as they would be kept from apostatizing, to depart from iniquity. His words are as if he had said, "Since many of you are ready to fear that your faith shall be overthrown, as well as that of others, by the sophistry or cunning arts of those apostates who lie in wait to deceive, you may be assured that the state of those is safe who are built upon the foundation which God has laid, that 'chief corner-stone, elect, precious,' namely, Christ, 'on whom he that believeth shall not be confounded.'"^z Or the meaning is, that the instability of human conduct shall not render it a matter of uncertainty, whether they who are ordained to eternal life shall be saved or not; for their being saved depends on God's purpose, which is a sure foundation, and has this seal annexed to it, whereby our faith as to our being saved may be confirmed, that they whom God has set apart for himself, and lays a special claim to as his chosen and redeemed ones, whom he has foreknown and loved with an everlasting love, shall not perish eternally, because the purpose of God cannot be frustrated. But inasmuch as there is no special revelation given to particular persons, that they are the objects of this purpose of grace; all who name or profess the name of Christ ought to use the utmost caution that they be not ensnared; let them depart from all iniquity, and not converse with those who endeavour to overthrow their faith. Indeed, all who are faithful shall be kept from iniquity by God, as they are here given to understand that it is their duty to endeavour to depart from it; and consequently they shall be kept from apostasy. This seems to be the sense of these words; and it is agreeable to the analogy of faith, as well as a plain proof of the doctrine which we are maintaining.

A late writer,^z by 'the foundation of God, which standeth sure,' supposes the doctrine of the resurrection to be intended, which Hymeneus and Philetus denied, saying that it 'was past already.' This doctrine, says he, which is a fundamental article of faith, 'standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his;'^y that is, he loveth and approveth of them. But though it is true that the resurrection is spoken of in the foregoing verse, and we do not deny that it is a fundamental article of faith; yet it does not seem to be what is intended by the word 'foundation' in this text. For if by the resurrection we understand the doctrine of the general resurrection of the dead, I cannot see where the force of the apostle's argument lies, namely, that there shall be a general resurrection, because the Lord knoweth who are his; for the whole world are to be raised from the dead. But if by the resurrection we are to understand a resurrection to eternal life, so that they who are known or beloved of God shall have their part in it, and if the apostle's reasoning be, that they who believe shall be raised to eternal life; this interpreta-

^u John iv. 14.

^x Chap. v. 24.

^y 1 Pet. ii. 6.

^z See Whitby's Discourse, &c. pages 67, 68, 463.

tion, so far from militating against the argument we are maintaining, is agreeable to the sense we have given of the text, and makes for us rather than against us. As to what is farther advanced by the author just referred to, namely, that the words 'The Lord knoweth them that are his,' are to be taken for that regard which God had to his apostles and ministers, this sense of the text seems too great a strain on the words, and is so much different from the scope of the apostle, as well as disagreeable to the caution given, that 'every one who names the name of Christ should depart from iniquity,' that no one who reads the scriptures without prejudice, can easily adopt it.

I shall mention but one scripture more for the proof of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance; and that is 1 John ii. 19, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.' For understanding this, let it be considered that the apostle is speaking of some who were formerly members of the church, who afterwards turned apostates and open enemies to Christ and his gospel. It is plain that the words 'they went out from us,' and 'they were not of us,' must be taken in different respects; for it would imply a contradiction to say that a person departed from the faith and communion of the church, when he never embraced it or had communion with it. But if the two phrases be differently understood, these persons left the faith and communion of the church because they were Christians only in pretence, and did not heartily embrace the faith on which the church was built, and were not really made partakers of that grace which the apostles and other faithful members of the church had received from God, as being effectually called by it. The sense is thus very plain and easy: there were some false professors, who made a great show of religion, and were admitted into communion with the church; and, it may be, some of them preached the gospel and were more esteemed than others. But they apostatized; for they had not the truth of grace, but were like the seed which sprang up without having root in itself, which afterwards withered. If, however, they had had this grace, it would have been abiding; and so they would, 'without doubt,' says the apostle, 'have continued with us;' but by their apostasy it appears that they were not, in this sense, of our number, that is, believers. They who understood this scripture, not of persons who were members of the church, but of ministers who first joined themselves with the apostles, and afterwards deserted them and their doctrine, advance nothing which tends to overthrow the argument we are maintaining. For, according to that interpretation, we may understand the words thus; they pretended to be true ministers of Jesus Christ, and doubtless, to be, as the apostles were, men of piety and religion, for in other respects, they were of them visibly, whilst they preached the same doctrines; but afterwards by departing from the faith, it appeared that, though they were ministers, they were not sincere Christians, for if they had, they would not have apostatized.

Examination of Objections against the Doctrine of Perseverance.

We shall now proceed to consider the objections which are usually brought against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace.

I. It is objected that there are several persons mentioned in scripture, who appear to have been true believers, and yet apostatized,—some totally, as David and Peter,—others not only totally but finally, in which number Solomon is included. Others, also, are described as apostates, such as Hymeneus and Alexander, who are said 'concerning faith, to have made shipwreck,' and who are hence supposed to have had the grace of faith. Judas likewise is reckoned to have been a true believer, whom all allow afterwards to have proved an apostate.

1. As to the case of David and Peter, it is true, that their fall was very notorious, that the former seems to have continued some months in a state of impenitency, and that when they fell, there appeared no marks of grace in either of them. Peter's sin, indeed, was committed through surprise and fear; yet it had such aggravating circumstances attending it, that if others, whose character is less esta-

blished than his was, had committed the same sin, we should be ready to conclude that they were in a state of unregeneracy. And David's sin was committed with such deliberation, and was so complicated a crime, that if any believer ever lost the principle of grace, we should have been inclined to suppose that he did so. Yet what gives us ground to conclude that this principle was not wholly extinguished either in Peter or in him at the time that they fell, and therefore that they were not total apostates, is what we formerly observed, that the principle of grace may be altogether inactive and yet abide in the soul, agreeably to the sense we gave of that scripture, 'His seed abideth in him.' If what has been already said concerning the possibility of the principle of grace remaining, though it makes no resistance against the contrary habits of sin, be of any force,^a then these instances, and others of a similar nature on which one branch of the objection is founded, will not be sufficient to prove the possibility of the total apostasy of any true believer.

2. As to the case of Solomon, that he once was a true believer, is allowed on both sides. For it is said concerning him, soon after he was born, that 'the Lord loved him ;'^b on which account he gave him the significant name, Jedidiah, 'the beloved of the Lord.' It is certain, also, that, in the beginning of his reign, his piety was no less remarkable than his wisdom. This appears from his great zeal, expressed in building the temple of God, and establishing its worship ; and also from the extraordinary instance of devotion with which he dedicated or consecrated this house to God,^c and the prayer put up to him on that occasion. It appears also from God's appearing to him twice. In his first appearance, he condescended to ask him, what he should give him ; and upon Solomon's choosing 'an understanding heart' to judge his people, he was pleased with him, and gave him several other things which he asked not for, so that there were 'not any among the kings like unto him.'^d From all this it is taken for granted that he once was a believer. But, on the other hand, we must, if we duly weigh the force of the objection, set the latter part of his life against the former ; and then we find him guilty of very great sins. Not only did he multiply wives and concubines, beyond what any of his predecessors had done ; but 'his heart was turned away after other gods, and,' as is expressly said, 'was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.'^e It is also said that 'the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice.'^f On this occasion, he determined to rend part of the kingdom from his son ;^g which came to pass accordingly. Now, all this is said to have been done 'when he was old ;'^h and in the remaining part of his history, we read of several who were 'stirred up as adversaries' to him,ⁱ and of little but trouble and uneasiness that he met with. This seemed to continue to his death, an account of which we have in 1 Kings xi. chapter throughout ; which contains the history of his sin and troubles, but does not contain the least intimation of his repentance. For this reason he is supposed, in the objection, to have apostatized totally and finally.

The main strength of this objection lies in the supposition that Solomon did not repent of his idolatry which he committed in his old age, or, as is supposed, in the latter part of his life,—a supposition which is based on the alleged silence of scripture as to this matter, especially in that part of it which gives an account of his fall and death. But what is alleged is not sufficient to support the weight of the objection, and to oblige us to regard him as an apostate ; for there is nothing in the account we have of him in scripture which appears to preclude the idea that he might have sufficient time for repentance, between his fall and his death. It is said, indeed, that in his old age his wives turned him aside ; but this they might do, and yet he not die an apostate ; for sometimes that part of life which is called old age comprises several years. Hence, when he began to be in his declining age, he might sin, and afterwards be brought to repentance. And as for the scripture speaking first of his fall, and then of his death, it does not follow that the one oc-

a See pages 175. 176.

d Chap. iii. 5, 9, 10, 12, 13.

i Ver. 14, 23, 26.

b 2 Sam. xii. 24, 25.

e Chap. xi. 4.

f Ver. 9.

c 1 Kings viii. 1, et seq.

g Ver. 13.

h Ver. 4.

curred immediately after the other : since the history of the blemishes and troubles of his life is but short. On the other hand, there are several things which may give us ground to conclude, that he repented after his fall. In particular, we have an intimation of his repentance in that communication of God respecting him in which it is supposed that God would suffer him to fall, and a provisionary encouragement is given to expect that he should be recovered. He says, 'I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.'^k The same thing is repeated in Psal. lxxxix. 30—34, in which his fall is supposed, and his recovery from it particularly mentioned; as though God had designed that this should be a supplement to his history, and remove the doubts which might arise with relation to his salvation. There are also some things in other parts of scripture which plainly refer to the part of his life between his fall and his death, which give sufficient ground to conclude that he was a true penitent. None can deny that he was the inspired writer of Ecclesiastes; inasmuch as it is said, in the title or preface set before it, that they are 'the words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem.' Now, if we duly weigh several passages in that book, we shall find many things in which he expresses the great sense he had of the vanity of his past life. He says, for example, 'I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly.'^l Here, by 'madness and folly,' he doubtless intends what was so in a moral sense, when he indulged his sinful passions, and what, therefore, respects the worst part of his life. This he farther insists on when he says, 'Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour,'^m or in all those things which afterwards were matter of grief and uneasiness to me. Here he observes how he did, as it were, take pains to bring on himself a long train of miseries which troubled him afterwards. And then he plainly expresses his repentance, when he says, 'All was vanity and vexation of spirit,' and there was 'no profit under the sun';ⁿ as though he had said, 'I turned from God to the creature, to see what happiness I could find in it, but I met with nothing but disappointment.' He had 'no profit in those things, whereof he was now ashamed.' It is probable, that God showed him the vanity of his pursuits, by his chastening him, or visiting his transgressions with the rod, and his iniquities with stripes, as he had promised to do, and so brought him to experience 'vexation of spirit.' This phrase is a plain intimation of that godly sorrow which proceeded from a sense of sin, which made him, beyond measure, uneasy; and this vexation or uneasiness was so great that he says, 'I hated life,' that is, I hated my past wicked life, and abhorred myself for it, 'because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous unto me,' that is, the work which I wrought was such as gave me grief of heart, 'for all is vanity and vexation of spirit,'^o that is, this is all the consequence of what I did. It cannot be supposed that he was weary of his life for the same reasons that many others are, who are deprived of the blessings of common providence, and reduced to that condition which makes them miserable as to their outward circumstances in the world. It was the uneasiness he found in his own spirit, the secret wounds of conscience and bitterness of soul arising from a sense of sin, which made him thus complain. Elsewhere, too, he seems to be sensible of his sin, in heaping up vast treasures. The doing of this he calls 'loving silver;' and he adds, what seems very applicable to his own case, that he who is guilty of it, 'shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase; this is also vanity';^p that is, this had been an instance of his former vanity. He adds farther, 'The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.'^q If by this we understand that the increase of riches sometimes gives disturbance to and stirs up the corruptions of those who possess them, and if the passage thus understood be applied to himself, it is an acknowledgment of his sin. Or, if we understand by it that the abundance of a rich man will not give him rest at night, when his mind is made uneasy with a sense of

^k 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.
^o Eccl. ii. 17.

^l Eccl. i. 17.
^p Chap. v. 10.

^m Chap. ii. 10.
^q Verse 12.

ⁿ Verse 11.

the guilt of sin, and if it be applied to his own case when he is fallen, it intimates that his repentance not only gave him uneasiness by day, but took away his rest by night. It seems also not improbable, that what gave him farther occasion to see the vanity of his past life, was the sense of mortality impressed on him; for he says, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart;' ^r that is, he will or ought to improve the sense of his own frailty, which we may conclude he had done; and therefore he adds, 'Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' ^s—It may be objected indeed, that all these expressions, and many others of a similar nature, which might have been referred to, which are expressive of great repentance, are not applicable to himself. Now, though I cannot but think that the contrary seems very probable; yet there is something farther added, which he expressly applies to himself, and which refers to his unlawful love of women: 'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands. Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher.' ^t If these things be not expressive of repentance, it is hard to say what are. We may add that, as he expresses a grief of heart for his past sins, so he warns others that they may not be guilty of that which he himself found more bitter than death. Accordingly, having described the arts used by the wicked woman to betray the unthinking passenger, he cautions every one to take heed of declining to her ways; inasmuch as the consequence will be, that 'a dart will strike through his liver,' and he is 'as a bird that hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.' ^u He also adds, 'She hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.' ^x So that we find in Solomon two of the greatest evidences which we can have of sincere repentance; namely, a great degree of sorrow for sin, and an earnest desire that others would avoid it, by giving those cautions which are necessary to prevent their falling into the snare in which he had been entangled.—Moreover, something is spoken in Solomon's commendation, after his death. This may be gathered from its being said that, during the three first years of Rehoboam's reign, which God approved of, 'he walked in the way of David and of Solomon;' ^y where we may observe that Solomon is joined with his father David. Hence, as there were abatements to be made for the blemishes in David's reign; the reign of Solomon had in it great blemishes. But as one repented, so did the other, and therefore ought not to be reckoned an apostate. We may add, that he was a penman of scripture; and it does not appear that God conferred this honour upon any who apostatized from him. On the other hand, they have the general character given of them by the apostle Peter, that they were all 'holy men of God.' ^z Thus, then, we must conclude Solomon to have been, till we have greater evidence to the contrary than they can produce who say he was an apostate.

3. There are others mentioned in the objection, namely, Hymeneus and Alexander, whose apostasy we have no ground to doubt of; but we cannot allow that they fell from or lost the saving grace of faith. It is one thing to fall from the profession of faith, and another thing to lose the grace of faith. Hence, the only thing to be proved in answer to this branch of the objection, is, that these persons, who are described as apostates, never had the truth of grace, or that they fell only from that visible profession of it, whereby they were reckoned to be, what in reality they were not, namely, true believers. Now, the apostle speaks of them as having 'departed from the faith,' namely, the doctrines of the gospel; and their doing this was attended with blasphemy, for which they were 'delivered unto Satan,' which is a phrase used by the apostle here and elsewhere, for persons being cut off from the communion of the church. Hence, he advises Timothy to 'hold faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck,' as these had done. Now, the main force of the objection seems to lie in this, that

^r Eccl. vii. 2.
foregoing verses.

^s Verse 3.
^x Verses 26, 27.

^t Verses 26, 27.

^u Prov. vii. 23. compared with the
^y 2 Chron. xi. 17.

^z 2 Pet. i. 21.

they who have made shipwreck of faith were once true believers ; and that, therefore, such may apostatize, and so fall short of salvation. But by 'faith' here is meant the doctrines of the gospel, which are often styled 'faith.' Thus it is said that the apostle 'preached the faith which once he destroyed.'^a Elsewhere also it is said, 'before faith came,' that is, before the gospel-dispensation began, and those doctrines were preached, which, under that dispensation, were to be published to the world, 'we were kept under the law.'^b Again, 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'^c that is, by hearing those doctrines which are contained in the gospel. Hence, what the apostle charges the apostates with, is making shipwreck of faith, considered objectively. They once, indeed, held the truth, but it was in unrighteousness ; they had right notions of the gospel, which they afterwards lost. Now, the apostle advises Timothy not only to 'hold faith,' that is, to retain the doctrines of the gospel as one who had right sentiments of divine truths, but to hold it 'with a good conscience.' For I take the expression, 'hold faith and a good conscience,' to contain an *hendiadis* ; and so it is the same as if he had said, 'Be not content with a mere assent to the truths of the gospel, but labour after a conscience void of offence towards God, that thou mayest have its testimony that thy knowledge of divine truth is practical and experimental, and then thou art out of danger of making shipwreck of faith, as these have done, who held it without a good conscience.' It is not said they made shipwreck of a good conscience ; for that they never had. What is said is, 'Concerning faith,' which they once professed, 'they made shipwreck.'

The same thing may be said concerning Judas. He apostatized from the faith which he once made a very great profession of, being not only one of Christ's disciples, but sent forth with the rest of them to preach the gospel and work miracles ; yet it is evident that he had not the saving grace of faith. Our Saviour, who knew the hearts of all men, was not deceived in him, though others were ; for it is said, 'He knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.'^d The principal force of the objection, however, is put in this way : Judas must needs have been a believer, because he was given to Christ ; and our Saviour says, that 'those who were given to him were kept by him,' and none of them was lost but the son of perdition.^e His being styled 'the son of perdition' argues him an apostate, and his having been 'given to Christ' denotes that he was once a true believer ; so that he fell totally and finally. In answer to this, some conclude that they who are said to have been 'given to Christ,' are such as were appointed, by the providence of God, to be his servants in the work of the ministry. Now, it is said concerning them, that they were given to Christ to be employed by him in this service, and that all of them were kept faithful, except the son of perdition. If this be the sense of their being given to him, it does not necessarily infer their being made partakers of special grace. It is one thing to be given to Christ, to be employed in some peculiar acts of service in which his glory is concerned ; and another thing to be given to him, as being chosen and called by him to partake of special communion with him. If Judas had been given to him in the latter sense, he would not have been a son of perdition, but would have been kept by him, as the other disciples were ; but as he was given to Christ only that he might serve the design of his providence in the work of the ministry, he might be lost, or appear to be a son of perdition, and yet not fall from the truth of grace. If, on the other hand, by being 'given to Christ,' we understand a being given to him as objects of his care and special love, we must suppose that all who were thus given to him were kept by him ; and in this sense Judas, who is called 'the son of perdition,' and was not kept by him, was not given to him. Accordingly, the particle 'but' is not exceptive, but adversative ; and the passage is as if our Lord had said, 'All that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost ; but the son of perdition is lost.' I have not preserved him ; for he was not the object of my special care and love. He was not given me to save ; therefore he is lost. Now it is certain that the particle 'but' is used in this sense in many other scriptures, particularly that in which it is said, 'There shall in no wise enter into it,' that is, the

^a Gal. i. 23.^b Chap. iii. 23.^c Ver. 2.^d John vi. 64.^e Chap. xvii. 12.

heavenly Jerusalem, 'any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;' which is as if it had been said, 'Ungodly men shall not enter in; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life shall.'^g Thus much concerning the objection taken from particular persons who are supposed to have fallen from grace.

II. The next objection is taken from what the apostle Paul says concerning the church of the Jews, whom he describes as apostatized from God. It is evident that they are to this day given up to judicial blindness, and not in the least disposed to repent of that crime for which they were cast off. Concerning these, he says that they once were holy: 'If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches;' and afterwards he speaks of 'their casting away,' and of 'some of the branches being broken off, because of unbelief.'ⁱ Now, say the objectors, if the whole church apostatized, we must conclude that at least some of them were true believers. Hence, true believers may fall from the grace of God.

Now, that the church of the Jews apostatized, and were cut off for their unbelief, is sufficiently evident. But we must distinguish between the apostacy of a professing people such as the church of the Jews were, who first rejected God, and then were cast off by him, and the apostacy of those who were truly religious amongst them. The apostle himself gives us ground for this distinction, when he says, 'They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.'^k Elsewhere, also, he distinguishes between one who is a Jew, as being partaker of the external privileges of the covenant which the Jewish church was under; and a person's being a Jew, as partaking of the saving blessings of that covenant. He says, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.'^l A church may lose its external privileges, and cease to have the honourable character given it of being a church, — the greatest part of them may be blinded; when, at the same time, 'the election,' that is, all among them who were chosen to eternal life, 'obtain it.' The apostle observes this,^m and, in doing so, intimates that some who were members of the Jewish church were faithful. These were preserved from the common apostacy, being converted to the Christian faith. Their privileges as members of a church were lost; but they still retained their spiritual and inseparable union with Christ, which they had as believers, and not as the result of their being the natural seed of Abraham. They were made partakers of the blessings which accompany salvation; and therefore were not separated from the love of God in Christ; whilst formal professors and hypocrites, who were Abraham's natural seed, but not his spiritual, were cast off by Christ.

III. It is farther objected that there are some who have the character of righteous persons, concerning whom it is supposed that they may fall away or perish. The objectors particularly refer to Ezekiel xviii. 24, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath transgressed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.' The objectors refer also to Hebrews x. 38, in which it is said, 'The just shall live by faith; but if any man,' or, as the word should be rendered, 'if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' They hence infer that, as the righteous man may turn from his righteousness, and draw back to perdition, the doctrine of the saints' perseverance cannot be defended.

I. As to the former of these scriptures, we must consider the sense of it agreeably to the context, and the scope and design of the prophet. He had often reproved the people for those vile abominations which they were guilty of, and had denounced the threatenings of God, which should have their accomplishment in

f Rev. xxi. 27.

g See several other scriptures in which $\alpha\mu\eta$ is taken adversatively, Matt. xxiv. 36; Gal. i. 7; Rev. ix. 4.

h Rom. xi. 16.

i Verses 15, 17, 19, 20.

k Rom. ix. 6, 7.

l Chap. ii. 28, 29.

m Chap. xi. 7.

their utter ruin. Particularly, he foretells the judgments which should sweep away many of them before the captivity, and others that should befall them in it. This is the subject principally insisted on by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The people were, in consequence, sometimes represented as disliking the doctrine, desiring that 'smooth things' might be prophesied to them, and that 'the Holy One of Israel might cease from before them.'ⁿ At other times they are represented as complaining of the hardship of the dispensation, intimating that it was unjust and severe, and, at the same time, justifying themselves, as though they had done nothing which deserved it, and as though it was to befall them wholly for the sins of their fathers. Accordingly, there was a proverbial expression often made use of by them, mentioned in the second verse of this chapter, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But by this they did not understand that we expect to perish eternally for our fathers' sins; in which sense it must be taken if the objection in question has any force. Now God, by the prophet, tells them that they had no reason to use this proverb, and so puts them upon looking into their past conduct, and inquiring whether they had not been guilty of the same sins which their fathers were charged with; and he assures them, that if they could exculpate themselves from these, they should be delivered, and not die, that is, not fall by those judgments which either should go before or follow the captivity,—for that, as we have observed elsewhere,^o seems to be the sense of 'dying,' according to the prophetic way of speaking. For understanding this scripture, then, we must consider that the prophet addresses himself to 'the house of Israel.' These are represented as complaining that 'the way of the Lord was not equal,'^p or that God's threatenings or judgments, which were the forerunners of the captivity, were such as they had not deserved. He hence tells them that he would deal with them according to their deserts. 'When the righteous,'^q that is, one whose conversation formerly seemed to be unblemished, and who appeared not guilty of such enormous crimes as were committed by others—which may be supposed, and yet the person not be in a state of grace,—when such an one 'turneth away from his righteousness, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth,' that is, becomes openly vile and profligate, 'shall he live?' can he expect any thing else but that God should follow him with exemplary judgments, or that he should be involved in the common destruction? 'In his sin that he hath sinned, shall he die.' On the other hand, 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness,'^r that is, when they who have been guilty of these abominations shall reform their lives, or turn from their idolatry, murders, adulteries, oppressions, and other vile crimes which the people in general were charged with by the prophet, and which are assigned as the reason of God's sending the dreadful judgment of the captivity; I say, if there be such an instance of reformation, 'he shall save his soul alive;' that is, either he shall be delivered from the captivity, or shall be preserved from those temporal judgments which either went before or followed after it. This reformation, followed by deliverance from these judgments, amounts to something less than saving grace, and a right to eternal life, which is inseparably connected with it. Hence, if nothing else than what has been stated be intended by 'the righteous' and 'the wicked man;' and if the judgments threatened, or their deliverance from them in case of reformation, includes no more than temporal judgments and temporal deliverance; it is evident, that the passage does not in the least suppose that any true believer shall apostatize or fall from a state of grace. As we may distinguish between eternal death and temporal judgments; so we must distinguish between a person's abstaining from the vilest abominations as a means to escape these judgments, and his exercising those graces which accompany salvation. There may be an external reformation in those who have no special grace, if nothing farther be regarded than a person's moral character, or inoffensive behaviour in the eye of the world. If we consider him only as abstaining from those sins which are universally reckoned disreputable among persons who make any pretensions to religion, and if in this respect he be denominated

ⁿ Isa. xxx. 10, 11.

^p Ezek. xviii. 25.

11.

^o See Sect. 'Extent of the Atonement,' under Quest. xlii.

^q Verse 24.

^r Verse 27.

a righteous man; he may turn away from his righteousness and become immoral and profligate, and so be reckoned among the number of apostates. He cannot be said, however, to apostatize or fall from the grace of God; since moral virtue, or the exercise of righteousness in our dealings with men, is as much inferior to saving grace, as a form of godliness is to its power.

2. As to the other scripture mentioned in the objection, it is generally urged against us as an unanswerable argument, in the express words of it, to prove the possibility of the saints' apostasy. Our translation of it is charged with a wilful mistake, to serve a turn, and make the text speak what it never intended; since all, it is alleged, who understand the original must allow that it ought to be rendered, 'If he draw back,' which supposes that the just man may apostatize, or draw back unto perdition. But though the words, according to the form in which they are laid down, contain a supposition, it does not infer the being or reality of the thing supposed;^s but only this, that if such a thing should happen, it would be attended with what is laid down as a consequence. This is very agreeable to our common mode of speaking. We say, for example, that if a virtuous person should commit a capital crime, he will fall under the lash of the law as much as though he had made no pretensions to virtue. Yet it does not follow, that such an one shall do it, or expose himself to this punishment. On the other hand, if a king should say to a criminal, as Solomon did to Adonijah, 'If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth,' it cannot be inferred that he will behave himself so that his life shall be secured to him. The proposition is true, as there is a just connection between the supposition and the consequence; yet this does not argue that the thing supposed shall come to pass. So it is with the scripture under our present consideration. The proposition is doubtless true, that if the just man should draw back, so as to become a wicked man; if he should lose the principle of grace which was implanted in regeneration, and abandon himself to the greatest impieties; he would as certainly perish as though he had never experienced the grace of God. But it must not be inferred from this, that God will suffer such an one, who is the object of both his love and his care, thus to fall and perish, so that his soul should have no pleasure in him.—Again, if we suppose the person here spoken of, whom we consider as a true believer, to draw back, we may distinguish between backsliding or turning aside from God by the commission of very great sins, and apostasy,—or between drawing back, by being guilty of great crimes, so as to expose himself to sore judgments, and drawing back to perdition. The just man, in this text, is said, indeed, to draw back; but he is distinguished from one who draws back to perdition. Accordingly, it is said in the following verse, 'We are not of them who draw back to perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.' Such a drawing back as this, though it shall not end in perdition, inasmuch as the person shall be recovered and brought to repentance, shall yet be attended with very great marks of God's displeasure against believers for those sins which they have committed. Accordingly, 'his soul having no pleasure' in them, denotes that he would, in various instances, as a display of his holiness, reveal his wrath against relapsing believers, who shall nevertheless be recovered and saved at last. If these things be duly considered, the objection seems to have no weight, even though it should be allowed that the words upon which it is principally founded are not rightly translated.—I cannot see sufficient reason, however, to set aside our translation; it being equally just to render the words, 'If any man draw back.'^t For as the supplying of the words 'any man,' or 'any one,' is allowed in many other instances, both in the Old and the New Testament; so there is not the least incongruity in their being supplied in the text under consideration.^u Now if they be supplied, the sense which we

^s It is a known maxim in logic, 'Suppositio nihil ponit in esse.'

^t *Εαν υποστυληται.*

^u It is certain, that the particles *τις*, *ἄλλος*, and others of similar import, are often left out, and that the defect is to be supplied in the translation. Thus it is in Job xxxiii. 27. where the Hebrew word, which might have been rendered 'and he shall say,' is better rendered 'and if any say,' &c. In Gen. xlviii. 2, instead of 'he told Jacob,' it is better rendered 'one told Jacob,' or 'somebody told him.' In Mark ii. 1, *τις*, which is left out in the Greek text, is supplied in the translation, in which we do not read 'after days,' but 'after some days.' See Nold. Concord. Partic. pages 41, 42,

give of it, will appear very agreeable to the context. For the meaning is, 'The just shall live by faith;' or, as in one of the foregoing verses, they who 'know in themselves that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance' shall live by faith; but as for others who do not live by faith, having only a form or show of religion, whose manner is to forsake the assembling of themselves together,* these are inclined to 'draw back.' Let them know, therefore, that 'if any one,' or whosoever, 'draws back,' it will be at their peril; for it will be to their own 'perdition.' Yet, saith the apostle, that true believers may not be discouraged by the apostasy of others, let them take notice of what is said in the following words, 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' These things being duly considered, it will be sufficiently evident that this text does not militate against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance.

IV. There is an objection brought against the doctrine we have been endeavouring to maintain, taken from what the apostle says in Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' The force of this objection lies in two things, namely, that the persons are described as total and final apostates, and that, according to the account we have of their former condition, they appear to have been true believers. This is thought, by some who defend the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, to be one of the most difficult objections which we generally meet with against it. Those especially who cannot see how it is possible for a person to make such advances towards true godliness, and yet be no other than an hypocrite or formal professor, are obliged to take a method to set aside the force of the objection which I cannot agree with. They allege that when the apostle says 'it is impossible' that such should be 'renewed again to repentance,' the word 'impossible' denotes nothing else but that the thing is exceedingly difficult, not that they shall eventually perish. It is supposed that they are true believers; that their recovery, after such a notorious instance of backsliding shall be attended with difficulties so great that nothing can surmount them but the extraordinary power of God; and that though he will recover them, yet they shall feel the smart of their backsliding as long as they live,—that they shall be saved, 'yet so as by fire.'^y But

in which several texts of scripture are produced to the same purpose, and among the rest, this in Heb. x. 38, which we are at present considering as what ought to be rendered 'if any one draw back. In this and similar instances we may observe that the verb personal has an impersonal signification, or that which is properly active is rendered passively. So Eccl. ix. 15, *וְנִמְצָא בָהּ* is not rendered 'and he found in it,' &c., but 'now there was found in it.' Many other instances of the like nature are to be observed in the Hebrew text in the Old Testament; and sometimes this mode of speaking is imitated by the Greek text in the New. I might also observe, with respect to the scripture under our present consideration, that the learned Grotius observes that *τὸ* ought to be supplied, and that consequently the text ought to be rendered as it is in our translation, 'if any man draw back.' This he observes as what is agreeable to the grammatical construction of the words, without any regard to the doctrine we are maintaining, with respect to which he is otherwise minded.

x Heb. x. 25.

y To give countenance to this sense of the word 'impossible,' they refer to some scriptures in which it does not denote an absolute impossibility of the thing, but only that if it comes to pass it will be with much difficulty. Thus it is said, Acts xx. 16, that the apostle Paul 'hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost;' where his making haste argues that the thing was in itself not impossible but difficult. In Rom. xii. 18. we are exhorted, 'if it be possible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men.' This shows that it is hard indeed so to do, but that we are nevertheless to use our utmost endeavours to do it; which does not argue that the thing is in itself altogether impossible. There is another scripture which they bring to justify this sense of the words, namely, Matt. xix. 23—26, in which our Saviour's design is to show the difficulty of a rich man's entering into the kingdom of heaven. This he compares to a 'camel's going through the eye of a needle;' by which very few suppose that the beast so called is intended, but a cable-rope, which is sometimes called a camel. Thus the Syriac and Arabic versions translate the word. And a learned writer observes that the Jews, in a proverbial way, express the difficulty of a thing by that of a cable-rope passing through the eye of a needle. See Buxt. Lex. Talmud, page 1719, and Bochart Hiero. Part. I. lib. ii. cap. 3. And 'by needle' is not meant that which is used in working, but an iron through which a small rope may be easily drawn, though it was very difficult to force a camel, or cable rope, through it. They suppose, therefore, that our Saviour is not speaking of a thing which is absolutely impossible, but of what is exceedingly difficult; and that this may be

though the word 'impossible' may be sometimes taken for that which is very difficult, I cannot but conclude that the apostle is here speaking of that which is impossible with respect to the event, and therefore that he is giving the character of apostates who shall never be recovered. This appears, not only from the heinousness of the crime, as they are said to 'crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;' but from what is mentioned in the following verses, in which they are compared to 'the earth that bringeth forth thorns and briars, which is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;' and from their being distinguished from those who shall be saved, concerning whom the apostle was 'persuaded better things, and things that accompany salvation.' I think, therefore, he is speaking here concerning a total and final apostasy. But that this may not appear to militate against the doctrine we are maintaining, I shall endeavour to show that, notwithstanding the character the apostle gives of the persons he speaks of, they were destitute of the truth of grace; so that nothing is said concerning them, but what a formal professor may attain to.

They are described as 'once enlightened;' but this a person may be, and yet be destitute of saving faith. If by being 'enlightened' we understand their having been baptized, a sense in which the word is taken by some critics, and in which it was used in some following ages, it might easily be alleged that a person might be baptized and yet not be a true believer. But as I question whether, in the apostles' age,^z baptism was expressed by illumination, I would rather understand by it their having been convinced of the truth of the gospel, or their having yielded an assent to the doctrines contained in it. Now this a person may do, and yet be destitute of saving faith; which is seated not merely in the understanding, but in the will, and therefore supposes him not only to be rightly informed with respect to those things which are the object of faith, but to be internally and effectually called.—Again, they are said to have 'tasted the good word of God.' This description agrees with the character we formerly had of those who had a temporary faith,^a who seemed for a while pleased with the word, and whose affections were raised in hearing it. Thus, Herod is said to have 'heard John the Baptist gladly, and to have done many things;' and certain hearers of the word are compared by our Saviour to the seed sown in stony ground, which soon sprang up, but afterwards withered away. Now, a person may hear the word in this way, and yet not have saving faith; for it is one thing to approve of and be affected with the word, and another thing to mix it with that faith which accompanies salvation. As all men desire to be happy, a person may with pleasure entertain those doctrines contained in the word which relate to a future state of blessedness, and at the same time be far from practising the duties of self-denial, taking up the cross and following Christ, mortifying indwelling sin, and exercising an entire dependence upon him and resignation to him in all things. To do this includes much more than what is expressed by 'tasting the good word of God.'—Further, the persons are described as having 'tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and of the powers of the world to come.' All these expressions, I humbly conceive, carry in them no more than this, that they had been enabled to work miracles, or that they had a faith of miracles, which has been already described,^b and has been proved to fall very short of saving faith.^c The characters given of them, therefore, do not

inferred from his reply to what the disciples objected, 'Who then can be saved?' when he says, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' And to apply this to the scripture under consideration, they suppose that the apostle, when he speaks of the 'renewing' of those persons 'to repentance,' does not intend that which is absolutely impossible, but that it cannot be brought about but by the extraordinary power of God, with whom all things are possible.

^z We do not find the word used in that sense till the second century, by Justin Martyr [Vid. ejusd. Dial. 2.] and Clemens Alexandrinus [in Pædag. lib. i. cap. 6]. Now, we are not altogether to take our measures in explaining the sense of the words used in scripture from those who sometimes mistake the sense of the doctrine contained in it. Yet, even if we take the word in this sense, it does not militate against our argument, since a person may be baptized who is not in a state of grace and salvation.

^a See Sect. 'The Various Kinds of Faith,' under Quest. lxxii, lxxiii.

^b See Sect. 'The Various Kinds of Faith,' under Quest. lxxii, lxxiii.

^c There seems to be a *hendyadis* in the apostle's mode of speaking. By the 'heavenly gift' we are to understand extraordinary gifts, which are elsewhere called 'the Holy Ghost,' Acts xix. 2,

argue that they were true believers; and consequently the objection, which depends on the supposition that they were, is of no force to prove that saints may totally or finally fall from grace.^d

V. The next objection against the doctrine we have been maintaining is taken from Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?' The crime here spoken of is of the most heinous nature, and the greatest punishment is said to be inflicted for it. Now, say the objectors, inasmuch as these are described as having been 'sanctified by the blood of the covenant,' it follows that they were true believers, and consequently true believers may apostatize and fall short of salvation. The force of the objection lies principally in the words, 'The blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified.' This expression is taken by divines in two different senses.

1. Some take the word 'he' in the same sense as it is taken in the objection, as referring to the apostate; and then the difficulty which occurs is, how such a one could be said to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant, and yet not be regenerated, effectually called, or a true believer. To solve this, they suppose that by 'sanctification' we are to understand only a relative holiness, which those have who are made partakers of the common grace of the gospel. Thus it is said, 'Israel was holiness unto the Lord,'^e or, as the apostle Peter expresses it, 'an holy nation.'^f They were God's people by an external covenant relation, and by an explicit consent to be governed by those laws which he gave them when they first became a church,^g and publicly avouched him to be their God, and he avouched them to be his peculiar people, which was done upon some solemn occasions.^h Yet many of them were destitute of the special grace of sanctification, as including a thorough and universal change of heart and life. Moreover, it is supposed that this privilege of being God's people by an external covenant relation, together with all those common gifts and graces which attend it, was purchased by and founded on the blood of Christ, which is called 'the blood of the covenant,' inasmuch as he was 'given for a covenant of the people';ⁱ and, pursuant to this, he shed his blood to procure for them the external as well as the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. The former of these, the persons here described as apostates are supposed to have been partakers of, as the apostle says, 'To them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.'^k They worshipped him in all his ordinances, as those whom the prophet speaks of, 'who seek him daily, and delight to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of him the ordinances of justice, and take delight in approaching to God;' and yet these things were not done by faith.^l In this respect persons may be sanctified, and yet afterwards forfeit, neglect, despise, and forsake these ordinances, and lose the external privileges of the covenant of grace which they once had, and so become apostates. This is the most common method used to solve the difficulty contained in the objection. But I would rather acquiesce in another way which may be taken to account for the sense of those words, 'The blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified.'

2. The word 'he' may be understood as referring, not to the apostate, but to our Saviour, who is spoken of immediately before. Thus the apostate is said to 'trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith He,' that is, Christ, 'was sanctified, an unholy thing.' That this sense may appear just, it may be observed, that Christ was, in two respects, sanctified or set apart by the Father, to perform all the branches of his mediatorial office. He was

because they were from the Holy Ghost as effects of his power, and wrought to confirm the gospel-dispensation, which is called 'the world to come,' Heb. ii. 5, and therefore they are styled 'the powers of the world to come.'

d [For some remarks on Heb. vi. 4—6, and the apostates whom it describes, see Note 'Is any Sin Unpardonable?' appended to Sect. 'For Whom Prayer is not to be made,' under Quest. clxxxiv.—ED.]

e Jer. ii. 3.
i Isa. xli. 6.

f 1 Pet. ii. 9.
k Rom. ix. 4.

g Exod. xxiv. 3.
l Isa. lviii. 2.

h Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

so set apart as he was foreordained or appointed by him, to come into the world to shed his blood for the redemption of his people. Accordingly, his undertaking to redeem them, is called his sanctifying or devoting himself to perform this work. 'For their sakes,' says he, 'I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.'^m This he did in pursuance of the eternal transaction between the Father and him, relating to their redemption. But it will be said, that this was antecedent to his dying for them; and that hence he could not, properly speaking, be said, in this respect, to be 'sanctified by the blood of the covenant.' We add, therefore, that he was also sanctified or set apart by the Father, to apply the work of redemption after he had purchased it. His sanctification was, in the most proper sense, the result of his shedding his blood, which was the blood of the covenant. Hence, as he was 'brought again from the dead,' as the apostle says, 'through the blood of the everlasting covenant,'ⁿ all the blessings which he in consequence applies to his people are the result of his being sanctified or set apart to carry on and perfect the work of our salvation, the foundation of which was laid in his blood.

Moreover, that they who, in the passage under consideration, are described as apostates, had not formerly the grace of faith, is evident from the context, which distinguishes them from true believers. The apostle seems to speak of two sorts of persons. He speaks first of some who had cast off the ordinances of God's worship, 'forsaking the assembling of themselves together,' and these are distinguished from those whom he exhorts from this sin, who had the grace of faith, whereby they were enabled to 'draw near to God in full assurance thereof, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water.' Concerning these he says, 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'^o We must conclude, therefore, that others are intended in the text under our present consideration, who were not true believers. It hence does not appear from this text that true believers may totally or finally fall from a state of grace.

The apostates spoken of in this and the foregoing objection, were probably some among the Jews, to whom the gospel was preached, who embraced the Christian faith, being convinced by those miracles which were wrought for that purpose, but who afterwards revolted from it, and were more inveterately set against Christ and the gospel than they had been before they made this profession. Accordingly, as they had formerly approved of the crimes of those who crucified Christ, in which respect they are said to have crucified him; now they do, in the same sense, crucify him afresh. And as they had been made partakers of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; afterwards they openly blasphemed him, and did so with spite and malice. These texts, therefore, not only contain a sad instance of the apostasy of some, but prove that they were irrecoverably lost. This comes as near the account we have in the gospels of the unpardonable sin, as any thing mentioned in scripture. What has been said, however, to prove that they never were true believers, is a sufficient answer to this and the foregoing objection.

VI. Another objection against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, is taken from 2 Peter ii. 20—22, 'For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' They are also said in the following verse, to 'turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them;' and their doing so is compared to the 'dog turning to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'

Now, though every one must conclude that the persons whom the apostle here speaks of plainly appear to be apostates; yet there is nothing in their character which argues that they apostatized or fell from the truth of grace; and it is only such whom we are at present speaking of. It may be observed that the apostle is so far from including these apostates in the number of those to whom he writes this and the foregoing epistle, whom he describes as 'elect, according to the fore-

knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,' and as having been 'begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance reserved for them in heaven,' and as such as should be 'kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation,'^p that he plainly distinguishes them from them. For in the first verse of the chapter whence the objection is taken, it is said, 'There shall be false teachers among you, and many shall follow their pernicious ways.' He does not say many who **are** now of your number, but many who shall be joined to the church, when these false teachers arise. These persons, indeed, are represented as making a great show of religion, by which they gained reputation among some professors whom they seduced by means of it; and therefore it is said that 'they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and that they had 'known the way of righteousness.' Such might indeed be joined to the church afterwards; but they did not now belong to it. And what is said concerning them amounts to no more than an external visible reformation, together with their having attained the knowledge of Christ and divine things; so that they were enlightened in the doctrines of the gospel, though they made it appear, by the methods they used to deceive others, that they had not experienced the grace of the gospel themselves, and therefore they fell away from their profession, and turned aside from the faith which once they preached. It is one thing for a formal professor, who makes a great show of religion, to turn aside from his profession, to all excess of riot; and another thing to suppose that a true believer can do so, and that to such a degree as to continue in apostasy. This the grace of God will keep him from. [See Note O, page 194.]

VII. Another objection against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, is taken from the parable of the debtor and creditor, in Matt. xviii. 26, &c., 'The servant,' we are told, 'fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.' But afterwards, upon the servant's treating with great severity one of his fellow-servants who owed him a very considerable sum, his lord exacted the debt of him which he had before forgiven him, and so 'delivered him to the tormentors,' till he should pay all that was due to him. 'So likewise,' says our Saviour, 'shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' From this it is inferred, that a person may fall from a justified state, or that God may forgive sin at one time, and yet be provoked to alter his resolution and inflict the punishment which is due to it at another; an inference which is altogether inconsistent with the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace.

Now, we must observe that our Saviour does not design in his parables that every word or circumstance contained in them should be applied to signify what it seems to import. But there is some truth in general intended to be illustrated by the parables; and this is principally to be regarded in them. Thus the parable of 'the judge which feared not God, neither regarded man,'^q who was moved by a widow's importunity to 'avenge her of her adversary,' and after a while resolved to do so because the widow 'troubled him,' is applied to 'God's avenging his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.' Now, we must observe that it is only in this circumstance that the parable is to be applied, without any regard had to the injustice of the judge; or to his being uneasy by reason of the importunity which the widow expressed in pleading her cause with him.—Again, in the parable of 'the steward,' we read that he was accused of having wasted his lord's goods;^r and apprehending that he should be soon turned out of his stewardship, he takes an unjust method to gain the favour of his lord's debtors, by remitting a part of what they owed him, that by this means they might be induced to show kindness to him when he should be turned out of his service. It is said, indeed, that 'the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely';^s though our Saviour does not design, in the account he gives of his injustice, to give the least countenance to it as if it were to be imitated by us. Nor by his lord's commending

p 1 Pet. i. 2—5.

q Luke xviii. 2, &c.

r Chap. xvi. 1, &c.

s Verse 8.

him as acting wisely for himself, does he intend that it is lawful or commendable for wicked men to pursue similar measures to promote their future interest. But the only thing in which the parable is applied, is, that we might learn from it, that 'the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light;' and that men ought to endeavour, without the least appearance of injustice, to gain the friendship of others, by using what they have in the world in such a way that they may be induced, out of gratitude for those favours which they conferred upon them, to show respect to them; but principally, that in performing what was really their duty, they might have ground to hope that they shall be approved of God, and received into everlasting habitations.

Now, to apply this rule to the parable whence the objection is taken, we must consider that the design of it is not to signify that God changes his mind, as men do, by forgiving persons at one time and afterwards condemning them; as though he did not know, when he extended this kindness to them, how they would behave towards others, or whether they would improve or forfeit this privilege. To suppose this would be contrary to the divine perfections. But the only design of the parable is to show, that if they who now conclude that God has forgiven them, do not forgive others, they will find themselves mistaken at last; and that, though, according to the tenor of the divine dispensations, or the revealed will of God, which is our only rule of judging concerning this matter, they think they are in a justified state, it will appear that the debt which they owed was not cancelled, but shall be exacted of them to the utmost, in their own persons. All, therefore, which can be proved from the parable is, that a man may fall from or lose those seeming grounds which he had to conclude that his sins were forgiven. We are not to suppose that our Saviour intends that God's secret purpose, relating to the forgiveness of sin, can be changed; or that he who is really freed from condemnation at one time, may fall under it at another. Hence, what is said in this parable, does not in the least give countenance to the objection founded on it, or overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining.

VIII. Another objection is taken from what the apostle Paul says concerning himself, in 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' It is certain, say the objectors, that the apostle was a true believer; yet he concludes that, if he did not behave himself so as to subdue or keep under his corrupt passions, but should commit those open, scandalous crimes which they would prompt him to, he should in the end become a castaway, that is, apostatize from God, and be rejected by him.

But though the apostle had as good ground to conclude that he had experienced the grace of God in truth, as any man, and was often favoured with a full assurance of his having done so; yet he did not attain this assurance by immediate revelation, in the same way as he received those doctrines which he was to impart to the church as a rule of faith; for then it would have been impossible for him to have been mistaken as to this matter. If this be supposed, then I would understand what he says concerning his being 'a castaway,' as denoting what would be the consequence of his 'not keeping under his body,' but not as implying that corrupt nature should so far prevail that he should fall from a sanctified state. If he did not attain assurance by immediate revelation, he had it in the same way as others have, by making use of those marks and characters which are given of the truth of grace. Accordingly, he argues that, though at present he thought himself to be in a sanctified state, from the same evidences that others conclude themselves to be so, yet if corrupt nature should prevail over him, which it would do if he did not keep his body in subjection, or if he were guilty of those vile abominations which unregenerate persons are chargeable with, then it would appear that this assurance was ill-grounded, his hope of salvation delusive, and he no other than a hypocrite; and so, notwithstanding his having preached to others, he would be found, in the end, among those who were false professors, and accordingly be rejected of God. We may hence observe, that it is one thing for a person to exercise caution and use means to prevent sin, which, if he should commit it, would prove him a hypocrite; and another thing for one who is a true believer, to be suffered to commit those sins by which he would apostatize from God, and so miss of salvation.

IX. What we have just stated will serve to answer another objection which is usually brought against the doctrine we are maintaining. This objection is, that the doctrine is inconsistent with that holy fear which believers ought to have of falling, as an inducement to care and watchfulness in the discharge of their duty ; as it is said, ‘ Happy is the man that feareth alway.’^t But we must distinguish between that fear of caution, which is a preservative against sin, and includes a watchfulness over our actions, that we may not dishonour God ; and an unbelieving fear, that though we are in a state of grace, and are enabled to exercise that diligence and circumspection which becomes Christians, yet we have no foundation whereon to set our foot, or ground to hope for salvation. Or, it is one thing to fear lest we should, by giving way to sin, dishonour God, grieve his Spirit, wound our own consciences, and do that which is a disgrace to the gospel, through the prevalency of corrupt nature, whereby we shall have ground to conclude that we thought ourselves something when we were nothing, deceiving our own souls ; and another thing to fear that we shall perish and fall, though our hearts are right with God, and we have reason to expect that we shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

Practical Inferences from the doctrine of Perseverance.

We shall conclude this Answer with a few inferences from what has been said to prove the doctrine of the saints’ perseverance.

1. Since we do not pretend to assert that all who make a profession of religion are assured that they shall never apostatize, but only true believers, let unbelievers take no encouragement from what we have said to conclude that it shall be well with them in the end. Many are externally called, who are not really sanctified ; they presume that they shall be saved, but without ground, inasmuch as they continue in impenitency and unbelief. Such have no warrant to take comfort from the doctrine we have been maintaining.

2. We may, from what has been said, observe the difference between the security of a believer’s state, as his hope is fixed on the stability of the covenant and on its promises relating to his salvation, together with the Spirit’s witness with ours concerning our own sincerity ; and that which we generally call carnal security, whereby a person thinks himself safe, or that all things shall go well with him, though he make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. This is an unwarrantable security in a state of unregeneracy, or it is a licentiousness, which the doctrine of perseverance does not in the least give countenance to.

3. From what has been said concerning the apostacy of some from that faith which they once made a profession of, we may infer that it is only the grace of God experienced in truth, which will preserve us from turning aside from the faith of the gospel. The apostle speaks of some who, by embracing those doctrines which were subversive of the gospel, had ‘ fallen from grace,’^u that is, from the doctrines of grace ; concerning whom he says, ‘ Christ profited them nothing,’ or was ‘ become of no effect to them,’^x that is, the gospel, which contains a display of the glory of Christ, was of no saving advantage to them. All the sad instances we have of many who are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and are made a prey to those who lie in wait to deceive, proceed from their being destitute of the grace of God ; which would have a tendency to preserve them from turning aside from the faith of the gospel.

4. Let us be exhorted to be as diligent and watchful against the breakings forth of corruption, and endeavour as much to avoid all occasions of sin, as though perseverance in grace were to be ascribed to our own endeavours, or as though God had given us no ground to conclude that he would enable us to persevere. Yet, let us, at the same time, depend on his assistance, without which this blessing cannot be attained ; and hope in his mercy and faithfulness ; and lay hold on the promises which he has given us, that it shall go well with us in the end, or that we shall have all joy and peace in believing.

5. Let us endeavour not only to persevere, but to grow in grace. These two

^t Prov. xxviii. 14.

^u Gal. v. 4.

^x Chap. v. 2, 4.

blessings are joined together; as it is said, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.'^y

6. The doctrine of perseverance has a great tendency to support and fortify believers under the most adverse dispensations of providence to which at any time they are liable, and to comfort them under all the assaults of their spiritual enemies. For though these may be suffered to discourage or give them interruption in the exercise of those graces which they have experienced, yet grace shall not be wholly extinguished. Sometimes, also, by the overruling providence of God, those things which in themselves have a tendency to weaken their faith, shall be ordered as a means to increase it; so that when they can do nothing in their own strength, they may be enabled, by depending on Christ, and receiving strength from him, to prevail against all the opposition they meet with, and at last come off 'more than conquerors, through him that loved them.'^z

y Job xvii. 9.

z Rom. viii. 37.

[NOTE O. *The characters described in 2 Pet. ii. 21, 22.*—The proverb which the apostle quotes, is, 'As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly,' Prov. xxvi. 11. The character whom he describes, therefore, is a fool,—one who, notwithstanding his knowledge, or rather by misconceiving and perverting it, had never become 'wise unto salvation.' 'Swine' and 'dogs' are not sheep—they are not new creatures—they form no part of the flock, and never were admitted to the fold of the good Shepherd; but, according to the uniform imagery of scripture language, they are enemies of purity, lovers of corruption, false teachers, perverters of truth, depraved and wicked men. 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs,' says our blessed Lord, 'neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' The dogs of whom Peter speaks are expressly said by him to have been 'false teachers,' verse 1. Now this very class of persons are called dogs also by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul. 'His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber; yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand,' Isa. lvi. 10, 11. 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision,' Phil. iii. 2. Moreover, Peter says, respecting those whom he describes, that 'they have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,' Verse 15. Now, as they 'escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' so Balaam 'heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, and, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, said, I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth,' Numb. xxiv. 16, 17; and, as Balaam, on the one hand, became rebukeable even by a dumb ass for the madness of opposing what he knew, so the persons described by Peter 'turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them.' They and 'the mad prophet' were the same class of persons, and possessed a common character. Though they, for a time, escaped the pollutions of the world, they were always defiled and swayed by unsubdued pollution of heart. While externally 'washed,' they were internally altogether vile; and even when outwardly clean, they were but washed swine, unrenewed in their nature, filthy in their inclinations, prepared to roll themselves anew in the mire, governed by habits and possessing dispositions altogether alien from those of the sheep of Christ's pasture.—ED.]

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

QUESTION LXXX. *Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation?*

ANSWER. Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.

WE have considered a believer as made partaker of those graces of the Holy Spirit which accompany salvation, and by which his state is rendered safe. We have considered also that he shall not draw back unto perdition, but shall attain the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. But it is necessary for the establishing of his comfort and joy, that he should know himself to be interested in this privilege. It is a great blessing to be redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit; but it is a superadded privilege to know that we are so, or to be assured that we are in

a state of grace. This is the subject insisted on in the present Answer. In discussing it we shall observe the following method. First, we shall say something concerning the nature of assurance, and how far persons may be said to be infallibly assured of their salvation. Secondly, we shall endeavour to prove that this blessing is attainable in this life. Thirdly, we shall consider the character of those to whom it belongs. Lastly, we shall consider the means whereby it may be attained.

The Nature and Degrees of Assurance.

We shall speak first concerning the nature of assurance, and how far persons may be said to be infallibly assured of their salvation. Assurance is opposed to doubting, which is inconsistent with it. He who has attained this privilege, is carried above all those doubts and fears respecting the truth of grace, and his interest in the love of God, which others are exposed to, and by which their lives are rendered very uncomfortable. It may be considered also as containing something more than our being enabled to hope that we are in a state of grace; for though such hope affords relief against despair, yet it falls short of assurance, which is sometimes called a ‘full assurance of hope.’^a And it certainly contains a great deal more than a probability or a conjectural persuasion relating to this matter; which is the only thing that some will allow to be attainable by believers, especially they who deny the doctrine of the saints’ perseverance, and lay the greatest stress of man’s salvation on his own free-will, rather than the efficacious grace of God. All that they will own as to this matter is, that persons may be in a hopeful way to salvation, and that it is probable they may attain it at last; but that they cannot be fully assured that they shall, unless they were assured concerning their perseverance. This, however, they suppose, no one can be; because, as they think, the carrying on of the work of grace, as well as the beginning of it, depends on the free-will of man, and because, according to their notion of liberty, as was observed under another Answer,^b he who acts freely may act the contrary. They hence conclude that, as every thing which is done in the carrying on of the work of grace is done freely; no one can be assured that this work shall not miscarry; so that none can attain assurance. This is what some assert, but we deny. It is observed in this Answer, not only that believers may attain assurance that they ‘are in a state of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation,’ but that they may be ‘infallibly assured’ of this, and so possess the highest degree of assurance. How far this is attainable by believers, may be the subject of our farther inquiry.

It is a matter of dispute among some, whether assurance admits of any degrees; whether a person can be said to be more or less assured of a thing; or whether that which does not amount to the highest degree of certainty, may be called assurance. This is denied by some, for this reason, that assurance is the highest and strongest assent which can be given to the truth of any proposition; so that the least defect of evidence on which it is supposed to be founded, leaves the mind in a proportionable degree of doubt as to the truth of it; in which case there may be a probability, but not an assurance. If this method of explaining the meaning of the word be correct, it is beyond dispute that they who have attained assurance of their being in a state of grace, may be said to be ‘infallibly assured.’ Whether this be the sense of that expression in this Answer, I will not pretend to determine; neither shall I enter any farther into this dispute, which amounts to little more than what concerns the propriety or impropriety of the sense of the word ‘assurance.’ All that I shall add concerning it, is that, according to our common mode of speaking, it is reckoned no absurdity for a person to say he is sure of a thing, though it be possible for him to have greater evidence of the truth of it, and consequently a greater degree of assurance. Thus the assurance which arises from the possession of a thing cannot but be greater than that which attends the mere expectation of it. Hence, whatever be the sense of the ‘infallible assurance’ which is here spoken of, we cannot suppose that there is any degree of assurance attainable in this life, concerning the happiness of the saints in heaven, equal to that which those have

Heb. vi. 11.

b See Sect. ‘The Change wrought in Effectual Calling,’ under Quest. lxvii.

who are actually possessed of that blessedness. To suppose this would be to confound earth and heaven together, or expectation with actual fruition.

As to our assurance, there is among some another matter of dispute which I am not desirous to enter into, namely, whether it is possible for a believer to be as sure that he shall be saved, as he is that he exists, or that he is a sinner and so stands in need of salvation ; or whether it is possible for a person to be as sure that he shall be saved, as he is sure of that truth which is matter of pure revelation, namely, that he that believes shall be saved ; or whether it is possible for a person to be as sure that he has the truth of grace, as he may be that he performs any actions, whether natural or religious, such as speaking, praying, reading, hearing, &c. ; or whether we may be as sure that we have a principle of grace, as we are that we put forth such actions as seem to proceed from that principle, when engaged in the performance of some religious duties. If any are disposed to defend the possibility of our attaining assurance in so great a degree as this, thinking it to be the meaning of what some divines have asserted, agreeably to what is contained in this Answer, that a believer may be ‘infallibly assured of his salvation,’ I will not enter the lists with them ; though I very much question whether it will not be a matter of too great difficulty for them to support their argument, without the least appearance of exception to it.

I would not, however, extenuate or deny the privileges which some saints have been favoured with, who have been, as it were, in the suburbs of heaven, and had not only a prelibation but a kind of sensation of the enjoyments of it, and expressed as full an assurance as though they had been actually in heaven. It cannot be denied that this, in various instances, has amounted as near as possible to an assurance of infallibility. And that such a degree of assurance has been attained by some believers, both in former and later ages, will be proved under a following Head. Now, this, I am apt to think, is what is intended in this Answer by the possibility of a believer’s being infallibly assured of salvation. But let it be considered that these are uncommon instances, in which the Spirit of God, by his immediate testimony, has favoured persons with as to this matter, and are not to be reckoned as a standard, whereby we may judge of that assurance which God’s children desire and sometimes enjoy, which falls short of it. When God is pleased to give a believer such a degree of assurance as carries him above all his doubts and fears with respect to his being in a state of grace, and fills him with those consequent joys which are unspeakable and full of glory ; the believer possesses that assurance which we are now to consider, and which, in this Answer, is called an infallible assurance. But as to whether it is more or less properly called ‘an infallible assurance,’ we have nothing farther to add.

The Attainableness of Assurance.

We shall now proceed to prove that this privilege is attainable in the present life.

1. We observe, then, that if the knowledge of other things which are of less importance be attainable, certainly it is possible for us to attain that which is of the greatest importance. This argument is founded on the goodness of God. If he has given us sufficient means to lead us into the knowledge of things which respect our comfort and happiness in this world ; has he left us altogether destitute of those means whereby we may conclude that it shall go well with us in a better ? God has sometimes been pleased to favour his people with some intimations concerning the blessings of common providence, which they might expect for their encouragement, under the trials and difficulties which they were to meet with in the world. Our Saviour encourages his disciples to expect that, notwithstanding their present destitute circumstances, as to outward things, their Father, who ‘knoweth that they had need of them,’ would supply their wants ; so that they had no reason to be over-solicitous in ‘taking thought what they should eat and drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed.’^c God, that he may encourage the faith of his people, gives them assurance that ‘no temptation shall befall them, but what

is common to men,' or that they shall not be pressed down, so as to sink and despair of help from him, under the burdens and difficulties which, in the course of his providence, he lays on them. Now, if he is pleased to give such intimations to his people, with respect to their condition in this world, that they may be assured that it shall go well with them as to many things which concern their outward circumstances; may we not conclude that the assurance of those things which concern their everlasting salvation may be attained? Or, if the promises which respect the one may be depended on, so as to afford relief against all doubts and fears which may arise from our present circumstances in the world; may we not, with as good reason, suppose that the promises which respect the other, namely, the carrying on and perfecting of the work of grace, afford equal matter of encouragement? May we not hence conclude, that the one is as much to be depended on as the other; so that, as the apostle says, 'they who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them, may have a strong consolation' arising thence?^d

It will be objected that the promises which respect outward blessings are not always fulfilled; so that we cannot be assured concerning our future condition, as to outward circumstances in the world; though godliness, as the apostle says, 'hath promise of the life that now is,' as well as of 'that which is to come.' This, say the objectors, appears from the uncommon instances of affliction which the best men often meet with, and which others are exempted from. It is hence inferred that the promises which respect the carrying on and completing of the work of grace, will not afford that assurance of salvation which we suppose a believer may attain to as founded on them. Now, we reply, that the promises of outward blessings are always fulfilled, either in kind or in value. Sometimes the destitute state of believers, as to the good things of this life, is abundantly compensated with those spiritual blessings which are bestowed on them at present, or are reserved for them hereafter. Hence, if their condition in the world be attended with little else but affliction, they have no reason to say that they are disappointed; for while they are denied lesser blessings, they have greater instead. Their assurance of the accomplishment of the promises of outward blessings, therefore, must be understood with this limitation. But as to spiritual blessings which God has promised to his people, there is no foundation for any distinction of their being made good in kind or in value. If the promise of eternal life be not made good according to the letter of it, it cannot, in any sense, be said to be accomplished. Hence, as God gives his people these promises, as a foundation of hope, we may conclude that the assurance of believers relating to their salvation, is as much to be depended on as the assurance they have, founded on the promises of God, concerning any blessings which may tend to support them in their present condition in the world.

2. That assurance of justification, sanctification, and salvation, may be attained in this life, is farther evident from the obligations which persons are under to pray for these privileges, and to bless God for the experience which they have of the one, and the ground which they have to expect the other. That it is our duty to pray for them is no less certain than that we stand in need of them. This, then, being taken for granted, it may be inferred that there is some way by which we may know that our prayers are answered. To think that there is not such a way would be a very discouraging consideration. Nor, if there were not such a way, could the experience of answer to prayer be alleged as a motive to the performance of the duty; as the psalmist says, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.'^e Nor could any believer have the least reason to say as he does elsewhere, 'Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.'^f The apostle also says that, 'if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us';^g and, in the following words, he adds, 'We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' It follows, therefore, that we may know, from the exercise of faith in prayer for the forgiveness of sin, that our iniquities are forgiven. The same may be said concerning prayer for all other blessings which accompany

d Heb. vi. 18.

e Psal. lxxv. 2.

f Psal. lxxvi. 19.

g 1 John v. 14, 15.

salvation ; so that it is possible for us to know whether God has granted us these blessings or not.

It may be objected, that it is not absolutely necessary that an humble suppliant should have any intimations given him that his petition shall be granted ; or that it would be a very unbecoming thing for such an one to say, that he will not ask for a favour, if he be not sure beforehand that it will be bestowed. We answer, that we are not only to pray for saving blessings, but to praise God for our experience of them. Thus it is said, ‘ Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me ;’^h and ‘ Praise is comely for the upright.’ⁱ Now, this supposes that we know that God has bestowed upon us the blessings we prayed for. If the psalmist calls upon his soul to ‘ bless the Lord for forgiving him all his iniquities,’^k we must suppose that there was some method by which he attained the assurance of the blessing which he praises God for.

3. Some have attained the privilege of assurance ; and therefore it is not impossible for others to attain it. That some have been assured of their salvation, is evident from the account we have in several scriptures. Thus the apostle tells the church he writes to, ‘ God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation ;’^l and he says concerning himself, ‘ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.’^m

It is objected that though some persons of old experienced this privilege, yet it does not follow that we have any ground to expect it ; since they attained it by extraordinary revelation, in that age in which they were favoured with the spirit of inspiration, whereby they arrived at the knowledge of things future, even such as it was impossible for them otherwise to have known. At least, say the objectors, they could not, without these extraordinary intimations, have arrived at any more than a probable conjecture concerning this matter. Now, continue they, that by these means some obtained assurance, is not denied, while to pretend to more than this, is to suppose that we have it by extraordinary inspiration, which, at present, can be reckoned no other than enthusiasm. We answer, that though God does not give the church, at present, the least ground to expect extraordinary intimations concerning their interest in spiritual and saving blessings, as he formerly did ; yet we must not conclude that there is no method whereby they may attain the assurance of that interest in a common and ordinary way, by the internal testimony of the Spirit,—a testimony, as will farther appear under a following Head, which differs very much from enthusiasm, since it is attended with and founded on those evidences which God has given in scripture, of their being in a state of grace, and which they, in a way of self-examination, are enabled to apprehend in themselves.

That this may appear, let it be considered that there never was any privilege conferred upon the church by extraordinary revelation, while that dispensation was continued in it, but the same, or some other which is equivalent to it, is still conferred in an ordinary way, provided it be absolutely necessary for the advancing of the glory of God, and their edification and consolation in Christ. If this were not true, the church could hardly subsist ; much less would the present dispensation of the covenant of grace excel the other which the church was under in former ages, as to those spiritual privileges which they have ground to expect. It is, I think, allowed by all, that the gospel-dispensation, not only in the beginning of it, when extraordinary gifts were conferred, but in its continuance, now that they have ceased, excels that which went before it, with respect to the spiritual privileges which are conferred in it. Now, if God was pleased formerly to converse with men in an extraordinary way, and thereby to give them an intimation of things relating to their salvation, but at present withholds not only the way and manner of making such intimation to his people, but the blessings conveyed thereby ; it will follow that the church is in a worse state than it was before, or else it must be supposed that these privileges are not absolutely necessary to enable them to glorify God, which they do by offering praise to him, and to their attaining that peace and

joy which they are given to expect in a way of believing. If the church were destitute of this privilege, it would be in a very unhappy state, and retain nothing which could compensate the loss of those extraordinary gifts which have now ceased. They who insist on the objection, and charge the doctrine of assurance with savouring of enthusiasm, are obliged, by their own method of reasoning, to apply the same objection to the doctrine of internal, special, efficacious grace, which, under a foregoing Answer,ⁿ we proved to be the work of the Spirit; and if these internal works are confined to the extraordinary dispensation of the Spirit, then the church is at present as much destitute of sanctification as it is of assurance. We must hence conclude, that the one no more savours of enthusiasm than the other; or that we have ground to hope for assurance of salvation, though not in an extraordinary way, as much as the saints had in former ages.

Our Saviour has promised his people the Spirit to perform what is necessary for carrying on the work of grace in all ages, even when extraordinary gifts should cease. Thus he says, 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'^o Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.'^p And as to the privilege of assurance, it is said, 'We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.'^q Besides, there are many other promises of the Spirit, which, though they had their accomplishment, as to what respects the conferring of extraordinary gifts, in the first age of the church, yet have a farther accomplishment in what the Spirit was to bestow on the church in following ages, though in an ordinary way. This seems very evident from scripture, inasmuch as the fruits of the Spirit are said to appear in the exercise of those graces which believers have in all ages, who never had extraordinary gifts. Thus it is said, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'^r Now, if these graces be produced by the Spirit, as they are called his 'fruits,' and the exercise of them be not confined to any particular age of the church, we must suppose that the Spirit's energy extends itself to all ages.—Again, believers are said to be 'led by the Spirit';^s and their being so is assigned as an evidence of their being 'the sons of God.' On the other hand, it is said, 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'^t We may hence conclude that there was, in the apostle's days, an effusion of the Spirit common to all believers, besides that which was conferred in an extraordinary way on those who were favoured with the gift of inspiration; otherwise, having the Spirit would not have been considered as a privilege belonging only to believers, and being destitute of it an evidence of a person's not belonging to Christ. As to the extraordinary dispensation of the Holy Ghost, it was not inseparably connected with salvation. For many had it who were Christians only in name, and had nothing more than a form of godliness; and, on the other hand, many true believers brought forth those fruits which proceeded from the Spirit in an ordinary way, who had not these extraordinary gifts conferred on them. Moreover, the apostle speaks of believers 'through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body.'^u Now, if the work of mortification be incumbent on believers in all ages, then the influences of the Spirit, enabling to this work, may be expected in all ages. To apply this to our present argument,—the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, which is the foundation of that assurance which we are pleading for, is, together with the other fruits and effects of the Spirit just mentioned, a privilege which believers, as such, are given to desire and hope for, and which they stand in as much need of as those who had this or other privileges conferred on them in an extraordinary way in the first age of the gospel church.—We might add, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were conferred on particular persons, and not on whole churches; while assurance is considered by the apostle as a privilege conferred on the church to which he writes, that is, the greatest part of them, whence the deno-

ⁿ See Sect. 'Effectual Calling a Divine Work,' under Quest. lxvii, lxviii.

^o John xiv. 26.

^p 1 John ii. 20.

^q 1 Cor. ii. 12.

^r Gal. v. 22, 23.

^s Rom. viii. 14.

^t Ver. 9.

^u Rom. viii. 13.

mination is taken. On this account, the apostle, speaking to the believing Corinthians, says, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'^x Here he does not mean only himself and other ministers, but the generality of believers at that time who are described as walking by faith. There are many things said concerning them in the foregoing and following verses, which make it sufficiently evident that he intends more than himself and other ministers, when he speaks of their having assurance; since many had it who were not made partakers of extraordinary gifts. We must not conclude, therefore, that the church has at present no ground to expect this privilege; or that they are liable to the charge of enthusiasm if they claim it.

But that the objection which we are examining may farther appear not to be sufficient to overthrow our argument, we may appeal to the experience of many believers in the present age, who pretend not to extraordinary revelation. Let it be considered, then, that many, in later ages, since extraordinary revelation has ceased, have attained this privilege, and consequently it is now attainable. To deny this would be to offend against the generation of God's people, of whom many have given their testimony to this truth, and have declared what a comfortable sense they have had of their interest in Christ, and what sensible impressions they have enjoyed of his love shed abroad in their hearts, whereby they have had, as it were, a prelibation of the heavenly blessedness. This assurance has been attended with the most powerful influence of the Spirit of God, enabling them to exercise those graces which correspond with these comfortable experiences, whereby they have been carried through and enabled to surmount the greatest difficulties which have attended them in life. Many, too, have been supported and comforted therewith at the approach of death; so that the sting of death has been taken away, and they have expressed themselves with a kind of triumph over it, in the apostle's words, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'^y—That some have been favoured with this invaluable privilege, is undeniable. The account we have in the history of the lives and deaths of many who have been burning and shining lights in their generation, puts it out of all doubt. And if this were not sufficient, we might appeal to the experience of many now living; for there is scarcely any age or place in which the gospel comes with power, but we have some instances of the Spirit's testimony to his own work, whereby it comes, with much assurance, a comfortable sense of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are the first-fruits and earnest of eternal life. But since this point will be particularly insisted on, and farther proofs given of it under a following Answer,^z we may at present take it for granted, that many have been assured of their being in a state of grace, who have not made the least pretension to inspiration; while to charge them with enthusiasm, or a vain ungrounded delusion, is to cast a reflection on the best of men, as well as on one of the highest privileges which we can enjoy in this world.—I am sensible that it will be objected that, though some have indeed expressed such a degree of assurance, yet this will afford conviction only to those who have it, who are the best judges of their own experience, and of the evidence on which their assurance is founded, but is not a sufficient proof to us, with respect to whom it is only a matter of report. It may also be said, on the other hand, that it is possible these persons might be mistaken who have been so sure of their own salvation. It is very unreasonable, however, to suppose that all have been mistaken or deluded who have declared that they have been favoured with this blessing. Charity will hardly admit of such a supposition; and if there be no possibility of attaining this assurance, they must all have been deceived who have concluded that they had it. Moreover, this privilege has been attained, not only by a few persons, and these the more credulous part of mankind, or by such as have not been able to assign any marks or evidences tending to support it; but by many believers who, at the same time, have been far from discovering any weakness of judgment, or disposition to unwarrantable credulity. Yea, they have enjoyed it at a time when they have been most sensible of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and

x 2 Cor. v. 1.

y 1 Cor. xv. 55.

z See Quest. lxxxiii.

could not but own that there was a peculiar hand of God in it; and the same persons, when destitute of the Spirit's testimony, have acknowledged themselves to have used their utmost endeavours to attain it, but in vain. It is alleged, indeed, that though we suppose assurance true to a demonstration to those who have it, as being matter of sensation to them, it is only matter of report to us; and that we are no farther bound to believe it, than we can depend on the credibility of their evidence who have declared that they have experienced it. But if there be such a thing as certainty founded on report, to deny which would be the greatest degree of scepticism, and if the truth of assurance has been transmitted to us by a great number of those who cannot be charged with any thing which looks like a disposition to deceive either themselves or others, we are bound to believe, from their own testimony, that there is such an assurance to be attained by those who pretend not to receive it by extraordinary inspiration from the Spirit of God.

The Character of the Persons who enjoy Assurance.

We are now led to consider the character of the persons to whom this privilege belongs. They are described, in this Answer, as 'such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him.' These only have ground to expect this privilege. It is an assurance of our having the truth of grace that we are considering; which supposes a person truly to believe in Christ. Accordingly, it is distinguished from that unwarrantable presumption whereby many persuade themselves that they shall be saved, though they be not sanctified. It is not 'the hope of the hypocrite' we are speaking of, which shall 'perish' and be 'cut off;' 'whose trust shall be as the spider's web,' which shall be swept away with the besom of destruction, and be like 'the giving up of the ghost,' which shall end in everlasting despair.^a What we are speaking of is a well-grounded hope, such as is accompanied with and supported by the life of faith; so that we are first enabled to act grace, and then to discern the truth of it in our own souls, and accordingly reap the comfortable fruits and effects which attend this assurance; as the apostle prays in behalf of the believing Romans, that 'the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing.'^b An unbeliever, therefore, has no right to this privilege. Indeed, from the nature of the thing, it is preposterous for a person to be assured of that which in itself has no reality; as the apostle says, 'If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.'^c And if faith be necessary to assurance, it follows, as is farther observed in this Answer, that they who have attained this privilege walk in all good conscience before God; whereby the sincerity of their faith is evinced. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.'^d

The Means of attaining Assurance.

We are now to consider the means by which assurance is to be attained, namely, not by extraordinary revelation, but by faith, founded on the promises of God. As to the former, we have already considered that assurance may be attained without extraordinary revelation; as it has been experienced by some in the present dispensation of the gospel, in which extraordinary revelation has ceased. Indeed, it may be observed, in the account the scripture gives of this privilege, that it does not appear that, when extraordinary revelation was granted to many in the first age of the gospel, the design of it was to lead men into the knowledge of their own state, so that they should by means of it attain assurance of their interest in Christ and right to eternal life. The main design of inspiration was to qualify ministers in an extraordinary way to preach the gospel; as the necessity of affairs seemed then to require it. It was necessary also for the imparting of some doctrines which could not otherwise be known. Inasmuch, too, as it was an extraordinary dispen-

^a Job viii. 13, 14, and chap. xi. 20.

^b Rom. xv. 13.

^c Gal. vi. 3.

^d 2 Cor. i. 12.

sation of divine providence, it was an expedient to give conviction to the world concerning the truth of the Christian religion ; since God hereby was pleased to converse in an immediate way with men, to testify the great regard he had to his church, and to promote the great ends of inspiration in propagating that religion which was then to be set up in the world. But we do not find that by extraordinary revelation the work of grace was ordinarily wrought or carried on ; nor was it God's instituted means without which believers could not attain assurance, for, in that age of extraordinary inspiration, they arrived at that privilege in the same way in which we are to expect to attain it. It is true, God occasionally intimated, by immediate revelation, that he would save some particular persons, and that their names were written in the book of life ;^e but these were special and extraordinary instances of divine condescension ; and it is not designed by them that others should expect to attain the privilege of assurance in the same way. Hence, it will be hard to prove that the apostle Paul, and others whom he speaks of, who were assured of their salvation, though they received the knowledge of other things by inspiration, were led into the knowledge of their own state in such a way, much less may we expect to attain assurance by extraordinary revelation.

We are now led to consider the ordinary means whereby we may attain assurance. This means is, in this Answer, said to be faith, grounded on the truth of God's promises, and the Spirit's testimony, whereby we are enabled to discern in ourselves those graces which accompany salvation. Accordingly, in order to our arriving at a comfortable persuasion that we shall be saved, there must be revealed those promises of life and salvation which are contained in the gospel. These are remotely necessary to assurance ; for without a promise of salvation we can have no hope of it. Yet though these promises are contained in the gospel, many are destitute of assurance. Again, it is necessary, in order to our attaining assurance, that there should be some marks and evidences revealed in the word of God as a rule for persons to try themselves by, in order to their knowing that they are in a state of grace. Now, we may say concerning this rule, as well as concerning the promises of salvation revealed, that, though it is necessary to assurance, yet it is only an objective means for our attaining it ; inasmuch as we are hereby led to see what graces experienced, or duties performed by us, have the promise of salvation annexed to them. Hence, it is further necessary that we should discern in ourselves those marks and evidences of grace to which the promise of salvation is annexed ; otherwise we have no right to lay claim to it. Accordingly, it is our duty to look into ourselves, and observe what marks of grace we have, whence we may, by the Spirit's testimony with ours, discern ourselves to be in a state of grace. We shall, then, in examining this subject, consider the following points ;—that in order to our attaining assurance, we must exercise the duty of self-examination ; what we may truly call a mark or evidence of grace, whereby we may discern that we are in a state of salvation ; and that we are to depend on, hope, and pray for, the testimony of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God, and that the evidences of grace are found in us.

I. In order to our attaining assurance, it is necessary that we exercise the duty of self-examination, which is God's ordinance for this end. It is certainly a duty and privilege for us to know ourselves,—not only what we do, but what we are ; for without knowing this, whatever knowledge we may have of other things, we are chargeable with great ignorance in a matter of the highest importance ; nor can we be sufficiently humble for those sins we commit, or thankful for the mercies we receive. If we reckon it an advantage to know what is done in the world, and are very inquisitive into the affairs of others, it is much more necessary and reasonable for us to endeavour to know what more immediately relates to ourselves ; or if we are very desirous to know those things which concern our natural or civil affairs in the world, whether we are in prosperous or adverse circumstances ; ought we not much more to inquire, how matters stand with us as to what concerns a better world ?—Again, we cannot know the state of our souls, without impartial self-examination. This is evident from the nature of the thing. As inquiry is the means

for our attaining knowledge ; so looking into ourselves is a means of attaining self-acquaintance.—Further, self-examination is a duty founded on a divine command, and an ordinance appointed for our attaining the knowledge of our state. Thus the apostle says, ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves.’^f Now, whatever duty God has commanded us to engage in, as expecting any spiritual privilege to attend it, is properly an ordinance for the attaining of that privilege ; and its being so is an argument to enforce the performance of that duty.

Having thus proved self-examination to be a Christian’s duty, we shall now consider how it ought to be performed. Here let it be observed that, as it is God’s ordinance, we are to have a due regard to his presence, and consider him as an heart-searching God, and depend on his assistance, without which it cannot be performed to any great advantage. But more particularly, we are to engage in this duty deliberately. It cannot well be performed while we are in a hurry of business. As every thing is beautiful in its season, so we ought to redeem time and to retire from the world, to apply ourselves to this as well as other secret duties. We have the more need to do this, that a rash and hasty judgment concerning any thing is generally faulty, and must be reckoned an evidence of weakness in him who passes it, and will be much more so when the thing to be determined is of such vast importance.—Again, the duty of self-examination ought to be done frequently ; not like those things which are to be performed but once in our lives, or only upon some extraordinary occasions, but often, at least so often that no presumptuous sin may be committed, or any extraordinary judgment inflicted on us, or mercy vouchsafed to us, without a due observation being made of it, in order to our improving it aright to the glory of God and our own edification. We cannot, however, exactly determine what relates to the frequency of this duty, any more than we can prescribe to those who are in a way of trade and business in the world, how often they are to cast up their accounts, and set their books in order, that they may judge whether they go forward or backward in the world. Yet, as the neglect of these mercantile duties has been detrimental to many, as to their worldly affairs ; so the neglect of self-examination has been often found an hinderance to our comfortable procedure in our Christian course. So far, however, as we may advise concerning the frequency of this duty, it would redound much to the glory of God and our own advantage, if, at the close of every day, we would call to mind the experiences we have had, and observe the frame of spirit with which we have engaged in all its business. This the psalmist advises when he says, ‘Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.’^g Moreover, it is advisable for us to perform this duty whenever we engage in other solemn stated religious duties, whether public or private, that we may know what matter we have for prayer or praise, what help we want from God against the prevalency of corruption or temptation, what answers of prayer we have received from him, or what success we have had under any ordinance in which we have engaged, as well as what the present frame of our spirit is when drawing nigh to God in any holy duty.

The duty of self-examination ought to be performed with great diligence. To arrive at a knowledge of ourselves, and the secret working of our hearts and affections in what respects things divine and heavenly, or to discern the truth of grace, so as not to mistake that for a saving work which has the external show of godliness without the power of it, requires great diligence and industry. Accordingly, the psalmist, in speaking concerning the performance of this duty, says, ‘I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.’^h The thing to be inquired into is not merely, whether we are sinners in general, or exposed to many miseries in this life in consequence of being so, for this is sufficiently evident by daily experience. But we are to endeavour after a more particular knowledge of ourselves ; and, accordingly are to inquire whether sin hath dominion over us to such a degree that all the powers and faculties of our souls are enslaved by it, and whether we commit sin in such a way as denominates us, as our Saviour expresses it, ‘servants of sin,’ⁱ or, whether sin be loathed and abhorred, avoided and repented

f 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

g Psal. iv. 4.

h Psal. lxxvii. 6.

i John viii. 34.

of. As to our state, we are to inquire whether we have ground to conclude that we are justified, and in consequence delivered from the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law; or whether we remain in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on us. We must inquire whether the work of grace be really begun, so that we are effectually called, and enabled to put forth spiritual actions from a renewed nature; and whether this work is going forward or declining, what is the strength or weakness of our faith. We are to inquire also what is the general tenor of our actions; whether the ends we design in all religious duties are right and warrantable; whether our improvement in grace bears any proportion to the means we are favoured with. Moreover, we are to examine whether we perform all those relative duties which are incumbent on us, so as to glorify God in our conversation with men; whether we endeavour to do good to them, and receive good from them, and so improve our talents to the glory of God, from whom we received them. These and similar things are to be inquired into; and our examining ourselves respecting them will be more immediately subservient to the attaining of the privilege of assurance.

Self-examination ought to be performed with the greatest impartiality. Conscience, which is to act the part of a judge and a witness, must be faithful in its dictates and determinations, the matter in question being one of the greatest importance. Hence, in passing a judgment on our state, we must proceed according to the rules of strict justice, not denying, on the one hand, what we have received from God, or resolutely concluding against ourselves that there is no hope, when there are many things which afford matter of peace and comfort to us; nor, on the other hand, are we to think ourselves something when we are nothing. Some are obliged to conclude, as the result of this inquiry into their state, that they are unregenerate and destitute of the saving grace of God. This sentence those are obliged to pass on themselves who are grossly ignorant, not sensible of the plague of their own hearts; who are altogether unacquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, or the method prescribed in the gospel for a sinner's justification or freedom from the guilt of sin, in a fiducial application of Christ's righteousness, which is the only means conducive to it; and who know not what is included in evangelical repentance, how sin is to be mortified, and what it is to depend on Christ in the execution of his offices of prophet, priest, and king. At least, if they have not such a degree of the knowledge of these things, though they cannot fully and clearly describe them, as may influence their practice, and excite those graces which all true converts are enabled to exercise, they have ground to conclude that they are in a state of unregeneracy. We may add, that a person must conclude against himself that he is destitute of the grace of God, if he allows himself in the omission of known duties, or the commission of known sins, and is content with a form of godliness without the power of it, or values and esteems the praise of men more than of God. Such must conclude that their hearts are not right with him.

Again, we must examine ourselves concerning our state, with a resolution, by the grace of God, to make a right improvement of that judgment which we are bound to pass on ourselves. If we apprehend that we are in a state of unregeneracy, we are not to sink into despair; but we are to wait on God in all his appointed means and ordinances, in order to our obtaining the first grace, that, by the powerful influences of the Spirit, there may be such a true change wrought in us that we may have ground to hope better things concerning ourselves, even things which accompany salvation. If, on the other hand, we find that we have experienced the grace of God in truth, we must be disposed to give him all the glory, to exercise a continued dependence on him for what is still lacking to complete the work, and, as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him.—Finally, this duty must be performed with judgment. We are to compare our hearts and actions with the rule which is prescribed in the word of God, whereby we may know whether we have those marks and evidences of grace whence we may conclude that we have a good foundation to build on, and that our hope is such as shall never make ashamed.

II. We are thus led to consider what we may truly call a mark or evidence of grace, whereby we may discern that we are in a state of salvation. In order to our understanding this, we must consider two rules. First, every thing which is a mark

or evidence of a thing, must be more known than that which is designed to be evinced by it. The sign must always be more known than the thing signified by it; inasmuch as it is a means of our knowing that which we are at present in doubt about; as when the finger is placed in a cross-road, to direct the traveller which way he is to take. Again, a mark or evidence of a thing must contain some essential property of that which it is designed to evince. Thus the inferring of consequences from premises is an essential property belonging to every intelligent creature, and to none else. It is hence a mark or evidence of an intelligent creature. So to design the best end, and use those means which are conducive to it, is an essential property of a wise man, and consequently a mark or evidence of wisdom. On the other hand, there are some things which are not essential properties, but accidental, as a healthful constitution is to a man, or a particular action which has some appearance but not all the necessary ingredients of wisdom and goodness to a wise or good man. Now, let these rules be applied to our present purpose, in determining what we may call marks or evidences of grace. With respect to the former of them, namely, that a mark must be more known than the thing which is evinced by it, we may conclude that eternal election, and the Spirit's implanting a principle of grace in regeneration, cannot be said to be marks or evidences of sanctification, since these are less known than the thing designed to be evinced. As to the other rule, namely, that a mark must contain an essential property of that which it evinces, it follows from it, that our engaging in holy duties without the exercise of grace, or our extending charity to the poor when it does not proceed from faith or love to God, &c., is no certain evidence of the truth of grace; for a person may perform these duties and yet be destitute of grace, while that which is essential to a thing is inseparable from it.—I could not but think it necessary to premise these general observations respecting marks of grace; inasmuch as some have entertained prejudices against all marks of grace, and seemed to assert that a believer is not to judge of his state by them. Nothing seems more absurd than this opinion. If they who adopt it have nothing to say in its defence, but that some assign those things to be marks of grace which are not so, and thereby lead themselves and others into mistakes about them; what has been premised concerning the nature of a mark or evidence, may, in some measure, guard against this prejudice, as well as prepare our way for what may be said concerning them. In treating this subject, we shall consider, first, those things which can hardly be reckoned marks of grace; and, secondly, what marks we may judge of ourselves by.

1. As to what are not to be reckoned marks of grace, we are not to conclude that a person is in a state of grace, merely because he has a strong impression on his own spirit that he is so. Such an impression is accidental, and not essential to grace; and many are mistaken with respect to it. It is not to be doubted that they whom our Saviour represents as saying, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?'^k had a strong persuasion founded on this evidence, that they were in a state of grace, till they found themselves mistaken, when he commanded them to 'depart from him.' Nothing is more obvious than that many presume that they are something when they are nothing. Indeed, a persuasion that a person is in a state of grace, merely because he cannot think otherwise of himself, the thing being impressed on his spirit, without any other evidence, lays him too open to the charge of enthusiasm.

Again, an external profession of religion, discovered in the performance of several holy duties, is no certain sign of the truth of grace; for this many make who are not effectually called. Of such Christ speaks when he says, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'^l We may add, that persons may have some degree of raised affections when attending on the ordinances, some sudden flashes of joy when they hear of the privileges of believers, both in this and in a better world; though their conversation be not agreeable to their confident and presumptuous expectation. On the other hand, some have their fears very much awakened under

^k Matt. vii. 22.

^l Chap. xx. 16.

the ordinances, as the subject of their meditations has a tendency to excite such fears; others have such a degree of sorrow that it gives vent to itself in a flood of tears, as Esau is said to have 'sought the blessing with tears;'^m but still there is something else wanting to evince the truth of grace. I do not deny that it is a great blessing to have raised affections in holy duties. But when these are experienced only in particular instances, and are excited principally by some external motives or circumstances attending the ordinance the persons are engaged in; and when the impressions made on them wear off as soon as the ordinance is over; we can hardly determine them, on the evidence of these raised affections, to be in a state of grace. The affections, indeed, are warmed in holy duties; but their being so is like iron heated in the fire, which, when taken out, soon grows cold again, and not like that natural heat which remains in the body of man, which is an abiding sign of life. This subject, however, is to be treated with the utmost caution; inasmuch as many are apt to conclude that they have no grace, because they have no raised affections in holy duties, as truly as others presume that they have grace merely because they experience such affections. Let it be considered, then, that when we speak of raised affections not being a certain mark of grace, we consider the persons who experience them as being destitute of other evidences which contain some essential properties of grace. The affections are often raised by insignificant sounds, or by the tone of the voice, when there is nothing in the matter delivered which is adapted to excite any grace, the judgment not informed thereby, nor the will persuaded to embrace Christ as offered in the gospel. There may be transports of joy in hearing the word, when, at the same time, corrupt nature retains its opposition to the spirituality of the divine truth. A person may conceive the greatest pleasure in an ungrounded hope of heaven, as a state of freedom from the miseries of this life, when he has no favour or relish of that holiness which is its glory, in which respect his conversation is not in heaven. He may also be very much terrified with the wrath of God, and the punishment of sin in hell; when, at the same time, he has not a due sense of the vile and odious nature of sin, or an abhorrence of it. Such instances of raised affections we intend when we speak of them as no marks or evidences of the truth of grace. But, on the other hand, when, together with raised affections, there is the exercise of suitable graces, and the impression of the raised affections remains after their fervency is abated or lost, a good sign is afforded of grace; though, when they are not accompanied with the exercise of any grace, they afford no mark or evidence of the truth of it. Now, that we may not be mistaken as to this matter, we ought to inquire, not only what it is that has a tendency to raise the affections, but whether our understandings are rightly informed in the doctrines of the gospel, and our wills choose and embrace what is therein revealed. If we find it a difficult matter for our affections to be raised in holy duties, we ought farther to inquire whether this may not proceed from our natural constitution. And if the passions are not easily moved with any other things in the common affairs of life, we have then no reason to conclude that our being destitute of raised affections in the exercise of holy duties is a sign that we have not the truth of grace, especially if Christ and divine things are the objects of our settled choice, and our hearts are fixed, trusting in him.

Further, the performance of those moral duties which are materially good, is no certain sign of the truth of grace. I do not say that this is not necessary; for when we speak of a mark of grace, as containing what is essential to it, we distinguish between that which is a necessary prerequisite, without which no one can have grace, and that which is an essential ingredient in it. Where there is no morality, there is certainly no grace; but if there be nothing more than morality, there is wanting an essential ingredient by which this matter must be determined. A person may abstain from gross enormities, such as murder, adultery, theft, reviling, extortion, covetousness, &c., and, in many respects, perform the contrary duties, and yet be destitute of faith in Christ. The Pharisee, whom our Saviour mentions in the gospel, had as much to say on this subject as any one; yet his heart was not right with God, nor was

his boasting approved by Christ. There are multitudes who perform many religious duties, when their doing so comports with their secular interests,—they adhere to Christ in a time of prosperity, but in a time of adversity they fall from him,—and then, that which seemed to be most excellent in them is lost, and they appear to be, what they always were, destitute of the truth of grace.

2. We now proceed to consider what are those marks by which persons may safely conclude themselves to be in a state of grace. In order to our determining this matter, we must consider what are the true and genuine effects of faith, as mentioned in scripture. There are other graces which accompany or flow from it; as when faith is said to ‘work by love,’ⁿ or to enable us to ‘overcome the world,’^o or despise its honours, riches, and pleasures, especially when standing in competition with Christ, or drawing our hearts aside from him. This effect it produced in Moses, when he ‘refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;’^p and in others, who ‘confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,’^q who ‘desired a better country, that is, an heavenly,’ whose ‘conversation was in heaven.’^r Moreover, we are to inquire whether faith has a tendency to ‘purify the heart,’^s and so puts us upon abhorring, fleeing from, watching and striving against, every thing which tends to corrupt and defile the soul; and whether it tends to excite us to universal obedience, called ‘the obedience of faith,’^t and a carefulness to ‘maintain good works,’^u which proceed from it and are evidences of its truth; as the apostle says, ‘Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works,’^x or as our Saviour says, ‘The tree is known by its fruit.’ But that we may more particularly judge of the truth of grace by its marks and evidences, we must consider its beginning and progress, or with what frame of spirit we first embraced and closed with Christ, and what our conversation has been since that time.

As to the former of these, our judging of the truth of grace by the beginning of it, we are to inquire what were the motives and inducements which inclined us to accept Christ. Did we first see ourselves lost and undone, as sinful, fallen creatures; and were we thence determined to have recourse to him for salvation, as the only refuge we could betake ourselves to? Did we first consider ourselves as guilty; did this guilt sit very uneasy upon us; and, in order to the removal of it, did we betake ourselves to Christ for forgiveness? Did we first consider ourselves as weak and unable to do what is good, and so apply ourselves to him for strength against indwelling sin, and victory over the temptations which prevailed against us?—Moreover, we ought to inquire whether it was only a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of God, and the punishment of sin in hell, which gave the first turn to our thoughts and affections, so as to put us on altering our course of life; or, whether, besides this, we saw the evil of sin arising from its intrinsic nature, and its opposition to the holiness of God; and whether our so seeing it was attended with shame and self-abhorrence, with a perception of the excellency and loveliness of Christ, with a feeling that he was ‘precious’ to us ‘as he is to them that believe.’^y We ought farther to inquire, what were the workings of our spirits when we first closed with Christ. Did we close with him with judgment, duly weighing what he demands of us in a way of duty, as well as what we are encouraged to expect from him? Were we made willing to accept him in all his offices, and to have respect to all his commandments? Were we earnestly desirous to have communion with him here, as well as to be glorified with him hereafter? Were we content to submit to the cross of Christ, to bear his reproach, and to count this preferable to all the glories of the world? Were we willing to be conformed to an humbled suffering Jesus, and to take our lot with his servants, though they might be reckoned the refuse and offscouring of all things?—Again, we ought to inquire whether we acted thus with reliance on his assistance, as being sensible of the treachery and deceitfulness of our own hearts, and of our utter inability, without the aids of his grace, to do what is good. Did

ⁿ Gal. v. 6.
^s Acts xv. 9.

^o 1 John v. 4.
^t Rom. xvi. 26.

^p Heb. xi. 24—26.
^u Tit. iii. 8.

^q Verses 13, 16.
^x James ii. 18.

^r Phil. iii. 20.
^y 1 Pet. ii. 7.

we, accordingly, give up ourselves to him in hope of obtaining help from him, in order to the right discharge of every duty? Did we reckon ourselves nothing, and Christ all in all, that all our springs are in him? This was a good beginning of the work of grace; and will prepare the way for this grace of assurance which we are now considering.

Some will object against what has been said concerning our inquiring into, or being able to discern, the first acts of faith, or that frame of spirit wherewith we first closed with Christ, that they know not the time of their conversion, if ever they were converted. They cannot remember or determine what was the particular ordinance or providence which gave them the first conviction of sin and of their need of Christ, and induced them to close with him. Much less can they tell what were the workings of their hearts at such a time. It is impossible for them to trace the footsteps of providence, so as to point out the way and manner in which this work was begun in their souls. Objectors will infer, therefore, that the frame of spirit in which persons first closed with Christ, which so few are able to discern, is not to be laid down as a mark or evidence of grace.—Now, I am not insensible that the case described is that of the greatest number of believers. There are very few who, like the apostle Paul, can tell the time and place of their conversion and every circumstance leading to it; or who are like those converts who, when the gospel was first preached by Peter, ‘were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?’^z or like the jailer, who broke forth into an affectionate inquiry very similar to this, ‘Sirs, What must I do to be saved?’^a though the ordinance leading to it was of a different nature. Sometimes the way of the Spirit of God in the soul at first, is so discernible that it cannot but be observed by those who are brought into a state of grace. Others, however, know nothing of this, especially they who have not run in all excess of riot, and been stopped in their course on a sudden by the grace of God; in whom the change made in conversion was real, though it could not, from the nature of the thing, be so plainly discerned in all its circumstances. Some have been regenerate from the womb; and others have had a great degree of restraining grace, and been trained up in the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel from their very childhood, and retain the impressions of a religious education. These cannot so easily discern the first beginnings of the work of grace in their souls. Yet they may and ought to inquire, whether they ever found, in the course of their lives, such a frame of spirit as has been already described, which believers have when the work of grace is first begun. Nor is it very material for them to be able to discern whether these were the first actings of grace or not. The main thing to be determined is, whether they have ground to conclude that ever they experienced the grace of God in truth. In this case, the most which some can say concerning themselves, is, as the blind man says in the gospel, when the Pharisees were inquisitive about the restoring of his sight, and the way and manner in which it was done, ‘Whereas I was blind, now I see.’^b The true convert says, ‘Whereas I was once dead in trespasses and sins, I am now alive, and enabled to put forth living and spiritual actions to the glory of God.’ This evidence will give as much ground to believers to conclude that they are in a state of grace, as though they were able to determine when they were first brought into it.

Again, we may judge of the truth of grace by the method in which it has been carried on, whether we are able to determine the way and manner in which it was first begun, or not. Sanctification is a progressive work. Hence, in order to our concluding that we are in a state of grace, it is not enough for us to set our faces heavenwards, but we must make advances towards it, and be found in the daily exercise of grace. A believer must not only set out in the right way, but he must hold on in it. He must live by faith, if he would conclude that the work of faith is begun in truth. It is not sufficient to call upon God, or implore help from him when under some distressing providences, and afterwards to grow remiss in or lay aside the duty of prayer,—it must be our constant work. A true Christian is distinguished from an hypocrite in its being said concerning the latter, ‘Will he de-

light himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?^c denoting that a true believer will do so. He is either habitually or actually inclined to it; and that in such a way as is attended with the daily exercise of those graces which are the fruits and effects of faith, whereby we may conclude that he is in a state of grace.

III. Thus far we have considered those marks or evidences of grace which, in order to our attaining assurance, we must be able to discern in ourselves. But a believer may understand what are the marks of grace contained in scripture, and, at the same time, inquire into the state of his soul to know whether he can apprehend in himself any evidences of the truth of grace, and yet not be able to arrive at a satisfaction as to this matter, so as to have his doubts and fears removed. Let it be considered, therefore, that he must depend on, hope, and pray for the testimony of the Spirit with his spirit, that he is a child of God. It will be a difficult matter for us to conclude that we have the truth of grace, till the Spirit is pleased to shine on his own work. But when he does this, all things will appear clear and bright to us; though formerly we might have walked in darkness, and had no light.

In speaking concerning this inward testimony of the Spirit, which is necessary to enable a believer to discern in himself the marks of grace, on his doing which his assurance of salvation is founded, let it be premised that, as it is a branch of the Spirit's divine glory, by his internal influence, to deal with the hearts of his people; so he does this in various ways, according to the various faculties of the soul, which are the subjects of his influence. In particular, when by his power he renews the will, and causes it to act those graces which are the effects of his divine power, he is said to sanctify a believer. But when he deals with the understanding and conscience, enabling us to discern the truth of the work of grace that we may take the comfort of it, he is described in scripture as a witness to our being in a state of grace, or as witnessing with our spirits that we are in that state; and the consequence is, that 'the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we know what is the hope of his calling.'^d Accordingly, he gives us to discern that he has called us by his grace; and that, as the result of his having done so, he has granted us a hope of eternal life.

This testimony of the Spirit is a privilege plainly mentioned in scripture. Nor must we suppose that none had it but those who had extraordinary revelation; since it is so necessary to a believer's attaining peace and joy, which the church is certainly not less possessed of in the present dispensation than it was in former ages. That the Spirit gives his testimony to the work of grace in the souls of believers, though extraordinary revelation has ceased, is evident from what is matter of daily experience. For there are many instances of those who have used their utmost endeavours in examining themselves to know whether they had any marks of grace, who have not been able to discern any, though they have been thought to be sincere believers by others, till, on a sudden, light has broke forth out of darkness, and their evidences for eternal life cleared up, so that all their doubts have been removed. This attaining of assurance they could not but attribute to a divine hand; inasmuch as formerly they could meditate nothing but terror to themselves. In this case, what the apostle prays for with respect to the church, 'that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,'^e is experienced by them. On this account they are said to be 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise'^f whereby their hope is established, and whereby that is now confirmed to them which they were before in perplexity about. We have therefore as much ground to conclude that the Spirit is the author of assurance in believers, as we have that he is the author of sanctification.

But that this doctrine may not appear liable to the charge of enthusiasm, let it be considered that the Spirit never gives his testimony to the truth of grace in any in whom he has not first wrought it; for to do this would be, as it were, a setting his seal to a blank. We may add, that, at the time when he gives his testimony to the truth of grace in believers, he excites the lively exercise of it, whereby they are enabled to discern that it is true and genuine; so that their assurance, though it

c Job xxvii. 10.

d Eph. i. 18.

e Rom. xv. 13.

f Eph. i. 13.

is not without some internal impressive influences which they are favoured with, yet is not wholly dependent on these. Hence, if you demand a reason of the hope which is in them, though they ascribe the glory of that hope to the Holy Spirit, as enabling them to discern the truth of grace, yet they are able to prove their own-selves, after having examined themselves whether they are in the faith, by discovering their evidences of the faith of God's elect. This fact argues that their assurance is no delusion.

DESTITUTION OF ASSURANCE.

QUESTION LXXXI. *Are all true believers, at all times, assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved?*

ANSWER. Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

HAVING considered some believers as favoured with assurance of their being in a state of grace, we are, in this Answer, led to speak of others who are destitute of it. Here something is supposed, namely, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of saving faith. Again, some things are inferred from this supposition; first, that true believers may wait long before they obtain assurance; secondly, that, after the enjoyment of assurance, it may be weakened and intermitted through bodily distempers, sins, temptations, and divine desertions; yet, thirdly, that they are never left without the support of the Spirit of God, and so are kept from sinking into utter despair.

Assurance not of the Essence of Faith.

As to the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of faith, many persons who, in other respects, explain the nature of faith in such a way as is unexceptionable, assert that assurance is of the essence of it. Now, in this we cannot but think they express themselves very unwarily; at least, they ought to have more clearly discovered what they mean by faith, and what by assurance, than they appear to do. If by assurance being of the essence of faith, they mean that no one has saving faith but he who has an assurance of his own salvation; they not only assert what is contrary to the experience of many believers, but lay a stumbling-block in the way of weak Christians, who will be induced to conclude that, because they cannot tell whether they are true believers or not, they are destitute of saving faith. On this account, it is necessary for us to inquire how far the opinion in question is to be allowed, and in what respect denied.

It is certain that there are many excellent divines in our own and foreign nations, who have defined faith by assurance; which they have supposed so essential to it, that without it no one can be reckoned a believer. It may be they were inclined thus to express themselves in consequence of the sense in which they understood several texts of scripture, in which assurance seems to be considered as a necessary ingredient in faith. Thus it is said, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.'^g Again, the apostle speaks of assurance as a privilege which belonged to the church to which he wrote, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'^h Elsewhere, also, he so far blames their not knowing themselves, or their being destitute of this assurance, that he will hardly allow those to have any faith who were without it: 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?'ⁱ From such expressions as

^g Heb. x. 22.

^h 2 Cor. v. 1.

ⁱ Chap. xiii. 5.

these, they who plead for assurance being of the essence of faith are ready to conclude that they who are destitute of it can hardly be called believers. But that this matter may be set in a true light, we must distinguish between assurance of the object, namely, the great and important doctrines of the gospel, being of the essence of faith; and assurance of our interest in Christ being so. The former we will not deny; for no one can come to Christ who is not assured that he will receive him, or trust in him till he is fully assured that he is able to save him. But the latter we must take leave to deny; for if no one is a believer but he who knows himself to be so, then he who doubts of his salvation must be concluded to be no believer. This is certainly a very discouraging doctrine to weak Christians; and, according to it, when we lose the comfortable persuasion we once had of our interest in Christ, we are bound to question all our former experiences, and to determine ourselves to be in a state of unregeneracy. But to do this would be in effect to withhold from God the glory of that powerful work which was formerly wrought in us, which we then thought to be a work of grace.—If, indeed, they mean by assurance being of the essence of faith, that an assurance of our interest in Christ is essential to the highest or most comfortable acts of faith, meaning by this doctrine that we ought to be incited to press after assurance if we have not attained it, and that God is very much glorified by it, and a foundation laid for our offering praise to him for the experience we have had of his grace, which a doubting Christian cannot be said to do; we have nothing to say against it. Or if they should assert that doubting is no ingredient in faith, nor a commendable excellency in a Christian; we do not oppose them. All we are contending for is, that there may be a direct act of faith, or a faith of reliance, in those who are destitute of assurance that they are in a state of grace. This is the thing supposed in this Answer, when it is said that assurance is not of the essence of faith.

That this may be better understood, and we be led into the sense of scriptures, such as those just mentioned and others of a similar kind, which describe believers as having assurance, let it be considered that there are many scriptures in which believers are said to have such an assurance as respects only the object of faith, namely, the person, offices, and glory of Christ, and the truth and promises of the gospel,—an assurance which we do not deny to be of the essence of faith. Thus the apostle prays for the church, ‘That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.’^k Elsewhere he says, ‘Our gospel came to you in much assurance.’^l And he exhorts persons to ‘draw near to God, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.’^m Now, it is probable that, in these and several other scriptures of similar import, he means no more than an assurance of the object of faith. As for the scriptureⁿ where he seems to assert that all who are destitute of this privilege are ‘reprobates,’ some understand the word which we translate ‘reprobates,’ as signifying only injudicious Christians; and if this be its meaning, the thing which it denotes is not inconsistent with the character of believers. Others, however, with an equal degree of probability, render it ‘disapproved;’^o and so the meaning is, ‘If you know not

^k Col. ii. 2.

^l 1 Thess. i. 5.

^m Heb. x. 22.

ⁿ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^o Though the word *αδοκιμοι* is sometimes used to signify such as are rejected as objects of God’s hatred, as in Heb. vi. 8, and consequently is inconsistent with the character of believers; yet in other places it may be taken according to its grammatical construction, as opposed to *δοκιμοι*, which signifies persons approved, 2 Tim. ii. 15; and so it signifies a person whose conduct is blameworthy, or whose actions are not to be approved of. Now, this may be applied to some who are not altogether destitute of faith; though they are not able to vindicate themselves in all respects as blameless. That the apostle uses the word in this sense here, seems probable from the application he makes of it to himself. It is said, verse 3, ‘Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,’ *δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε*; and, verse 6, he says, ‘I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.’ So we render the words *ἐλπίζω δεῖν ὅτι γινώσεσθε, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμεν αδοκιμοι*; but it would be more agreeable to what is said in verse 4, if we should render them, ‘I trust that ye shall know that we are not disapproved, or that ye shall find a proof of Christ’s speaking in us.’ In verse 7, he farther says, ‘I pray to God, not that we should appear approved,’ *οὐχ ἵνα ἡμεῖς δοκιμοι φανώμεν*, that is, not so much that ye should find a proof of Christ speaking in us, but that ye should do that which is honest; as if he had said, ‘I am more concerned for you than for myself.’ Though we ‘be as reprobates,’ *ἡμεῖς δεῖν ὡς αδοκιμοι ὡμῖν*, that is, whether you think we have a proof of Christ’s speaking in us or not, or of his approving us in the course of our ministry, my great concern is that you

your own selves, that Christ is in you, you are greatly to be blamed, or disapproved; especially as your not knowing this proceeds from your neglect of the duty of self-examination; by which means you have no proof of Christ's being in you, who are so ready to demand a proof of his speaking in his ministers.^p It does not appear from this text, then, that every one who endeavours to know that he is in a state of grace by diligent self-examination, but cannot conclude that he is so, must be determined to be destitute of faith; which would necessarily follow from our asserting that assurance of our interest in Christ is of the essence of saving faith.—There are other scriptures which speak of assurance as a distinguishing character of Christians in general; which are usually brought to prove that assurance is of the essence of faith. Thus, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'^q Again, 'We know that we are of God.'^r There are also several places in the New Testament in which the apostle addresses his discourse to whole churches, as having assurance as well as the grace of faith. Thus the apostle Peter speaks of them as 'loving Christ, believing in him, rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls';^s which could hardly be said of them, if they were destitute of assurance of their own salvation. All, however, that I would infer from these and similar scriptures is, that it seems probable that assurance was a privilege more commonly experienced in that age of the church than it is in our day. There may be two reasons assigned for this. First, the change which passed upon them when they were converted, was so apparent that it was hardly possible for it not to be discerned. They turned from dead idols and the practice of the vilest abominations, to serve the living God; which two extremes are so opposite, that their being brought from the one to the other could not but be remarked by themselves, and consequently more visible to them, than if their conversion had been otherwise. The other principal reason is, that the church was called at that time to bear a public testimony to the gospel, by enduring persecutions of various kinds; and some of them were to resist even unto blood. Now, that God might prepare them for these sufferings, and that he might encourage others to embrace the faith of the gospel, which was then in its infant-state, he was pleased to favour them with this great privilege. And it may be hereafter, if God should call the church to endure like trials, that he will in mercy grant them a greater degree of assurance than is ordinarily experienced. Nevertheless, it may be questioned whether those scriptures which speak of assurance as if it were a privilege common to the whole church, are not to be understood as applicable to the greater part of them, rather than to every individual believer among them. For though the apostle, in one of the scriptures before-mentioned, considers the church at Corinth as enjoying this privilege, and as concluding that it should go well with them in another world when this earthly tabernacle was dissolved; yet, in the same epistle, he speaks of some of them as not knowing their own selves, that Jesus Christ was in them. The apostle John also, notwithstanding his saying to the church, 'We know that we are of God,'^t which argues that many of them had assurance, plainly intimates that all had it not; for he says, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.'^u Though, too, in another scripture, just mentioned, the apostle Peter speaks to the church to which he writes, as having 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' consequent upon their faith, which argues that they had assurance; yet he exhorts others of them to 'give diligence to make their calling and election sure';^x so that these are supposed, at that time, not to have had it. From all this it may be con-

may be approved. It is plain, therefore, that the apostle uses the word *αδοκιμοι* as signifying disapproved. Hence, as it is applied to those he speaks of in verse 5, the meaning is, 'You seek to know whether we are approved of God as ministers; therefore I would advise you to examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith, and to prove your own selves; and if you know not yourselves, you are in this respect blameworthy, or to be disapproved; especially because you seem to have been negligent as to the duty of self-examination.' Whether he who is diligent in the exercise of this duty, and yet cannot apprehend that he is in a state of grace, be in this respect to be disapproved or not, it is certain that he who is a stranger to himself, because of the neglect of the duty, is disapproved.

p 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

t 1 John v. 19.

q 2 Cor. v. 1.

u Verse 13.

r 1 John v. 19.

x 2 Pet. i. 10.

s 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

cluded, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of saving faith; which is the thing supposed in this Answer.

Assurance may not be soon attained.

We proceed to consider the first of those things which are inferred from this supposition, namely, that a believer may wait long before he attains assurance. This appears from daily experience and observation. The sovereignty of God discovers itself in it, as much as it does when he makes the ordinances effectual to salvation in giving converting grace to those who attend upon them. Some are called early to be made partakers of the salvation which is in Christ; others late. The same may be said with respect to God's giving assurance. Some are favoured with this privilege soon after or when first they believe; others are like those whom the apostle speaks of, 'who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.'^y Many have often inquired into the state of their souls, and been unable to discern any marks or evidences of grace in themselves, whose conversation is such that others cannot but conclude them to be true believers. Their spirits are depressed; doubts and fears prevail, and tend to make their lives very uncomfortable; they wait and pray for the evidence and sense of God's love to them, but cannot immediately find it. This state of feeling the psalmist speaks of, either in his own person, or as representing the case of many who had the truth of grace but not the assurance of it, when he says, 'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee; I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.'^z God suffers it to be thus with his people for wise ends. Hereby he lets them know that assurance of his love is a special gift and work of the Spirit; without which they remain destitute of it, and cannot take comfort from either former or present experiences.

Assurance may be weakened and intermitted.

We observe next, that they who once enjoyed assurance may have it weakened and intermitted. Whether it may be entirely lost, will be considered under a following Head, when we speak concerning the supports which believers have, and how far they are kept by these from sinking into utter despair. It is one thing to fall from the truth of grace; another thing to lose the comfortable sense of it. The joy of faith may be suspended, when the acts and habits of faith remain firm and unshaken. As the brightest morning may be followed with clouds and tempests; so our clearest discoveries of our interest in the love of God may be followed with the withdrawment of the light of his countenance, and we be left under many discouraging circumstances concerning our state, having lost the assurance we once had. If it be inquired, what reason may be assigned for this? I answer, that it must, in a great measure, be resolved into the sovereignty of God, who will bring his people to heaven which way he pleases, and may take away those comforts which had their first rise from himself; and, at the same time, none must say, why dost thou thus? We may observe some particular reasons, however, which the providence of God points out to us, to which we may in other respects ascribe our want of assurance; and these may be reduced to four heads, particularly mentioned in this Answer.

1. The weakening or intermitting of assurance is sometimes occasioned by manifold distempers, or bodily diseases. The soul and body are so closely joined to and dependent on each other, that the one can hardly suffer without the other. Hence it is that bodily distempers affect the mind, excite and give disturbance to the passions, a circumstance which greatly adds to the uneasiness which follows these distempers. When the spirits are depressed, and we are under the prevalence of a melancholy disposition, we are often inclined to think that we are not in a state of grace; and though we were formerly disposed to comfort others in similar cases, we are now unable to take the least encouragement ourselves. All things

y Heb. ii. 15.

z Psal. lxxxviii. 1. compared with ver. 15.

look black and dismal ; our former hope is reckoned no other than delusive ; and we are brought to the very brink of despair. It may be observed, too, that these sad and melancholy apprehensions concerning our state increase or abate, as the distemper which gives occasion to them more or less prevails. Now, that we may be able to determine whether our want of assurance proceeds from some natural cause, or bodily distemper, we must inquire whether we formerly endeavoured to walk in all good conscience in the sight of God, to hate every false way, and make religion the great business of life, so that we cannot assign any reigning sin as the cause of our present desponding frame ; and also whether we have been diligent in performing the duty of self-examination, and have been sensible that we stood in need of the Spirit's witness with ours, in order to our arriving at a comfortable persuasion that we are in a state of grace. If, as the result of these inquiries, we cannot see any cause but the unavoidable infirmities to which we are daily liable leading to this dejection of spirit, we may probably conclude that it arises from a distemper of body. But in order to our determining this matter, we must farther inquire whether some afflictive providence has not had an influence upon us, to bring us into a melancholy temper ; and whether our depression of spirit does not appear in what relates to our secular, as well as our spiritual concerns. If this be the case, though it be very afflictive, it is not attended with that guilt which it would be, had it been occasioned by some presumptuous sin. In this case, too, there are other medicines to be used besides those which are of a spiritual nature, and are contained in the gospel, but what these are, it is not our business in this place to determine.

2. There are many sins which are the occasion of a person's being destitute of assurance. As all the troubles of life are brought upon us by sin ; so are all our doubts and fears, arising from the want of a comfortable sense of or interest in the love of God. It pleases God in the method of his providence, thus to deal with his people, that he may humble them for presumptuous sins ; more especially those which are committed against light and conviction of conscience, that he may bring to remembrance their sins of omission, or neglect to exercise those graces, in which the life of faith consists, that they may feel the effect of their stupidity, indifference, and carnal security, or their engaging in religious duties in their own strength, without dependence on the Spirit and grace of God, or a due sense of their inability to perform any duty in a right way. Or sometimes, as was formerly observed, they want assurance because they do not practise self-examination, which is God's ordinance for the attaining of this privilege ; or if they do practise it, they neglect to give that glory to the Holy Spirit which is due to him, by depending on his enlightening influence to bring them to a comfortable persuasion of their interest in Christ.

3. Assurance is often weakened and intermitted through manifold temptations. Satan is very active in this matter, and shows his enmity against the interest of Christ in the souls of his people, as much as lies in his power. Hence, though it is impossible for him to ruin the soul, by rooting out the grace which is implanted in it ; yet he tries to disturb its peace, and weaken its assurance, and, if not prevented, to hurry it into despair. In this case the general design of his temptations is to represent God as a sin-revenging Judge, a consuming fire, to present to our view the threatenings by which his wrath is revealed against sinners, and to endeavour to set aside the promises of the gospel from which alone relief may be had. Moreover, he puts us upon considering sin, not only as heinously aggravated—and it may for the most part be so considered with justice—but also as altogether unpardonable ; and, at the same time, pretends to insinuate to us that we are not elected, or that Christ did not die for us, and that, therefore, what he has done and suffered will not redound to our advantage. Now, there is apparently the hand of Satan in this matter ; inasmuch as he attempts, by false methods of reasoning, to persuade us that we are not in a state of grace, that God is an enemy to us, and that therefore our condition is desperate. Here he uses the arts of the old serpent, that he may deceive us by drawing conclusions against ourselves from false premises. He induces us to reason that, because we daily experience the internal workings of corrupt nature, which incline us to many sins, both of omission and of

commission, there is no room for us to expect mercy and forgiveness from God. From our barrenness also and unprofitableness under the means of grace, our improvements not being proportioned to the obligations we have been laid under, or from our having great reason to charge ourselves with many declensions and backslidings, which afford matter for deep humiliation, and should put us upon sincere repentance, he endeavours to persuade us that we are altogether destitute of special grace. Again, whenever we are unprepared or indisposed for the right performance of holy duties, and our affections are not suitably raised in them, but grow stupid, remiss, and careless, he puts us upon concluding that it is a vain thing for us to draw nigh to God, and that he has utterly rejected both our persons and our services. Or if we are not favoured with immediate answers to prayer, and sensible communion with God in the performance of that duty, he tempts us to infer that we shall never obtain the blessing we are pressing after, and that we may as well lay aside this duty, and say, 'Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' If by this method he cannot discourage us from engaging in holy duties, he sometimes injects blasphemous thoughts or unbecoming conceptions of the divine Majesty, which fill the soul with the greatest grief and uneasiness, that in consequence of these he might give us occasion to conclude that we sin in persisting in holy duties. By all these temptations he endeavours to plunge us into the depths of despair.

He tempts us also as to the purpose of God relating to the event of things. When we are led to determine that we are not elected, we come to this conclusion without sufficient ground. In presenting the question to us, he deceives us by pursuing false methods of reasoning, and puts us upon presuming to enter into those secret things which do not belong to us, or to infer that God has rejected us, because we deserve to be cast off by him for our sins, instead of giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. It is one thing not to be able to conclude that we are elected; and another thing to say that we are not so. The former is the consequence of our present doubts and desponding apprehensions concerning our state; the latter is plainly a temptation of Satan. This we are often subject to, when we have lost that assurance of our interest in Christ which we once enjoyed.

4. A believer's want of assurance is, for the most part, attended with, and arises from, divine desertion. Not that we are to suppose that God will cast off his people, whom he has foreknown, effectually called, and preserved hitherto, so as to forsake them utterly; for to suppose this is inconsistent with his everlasting love, and the promises of the covenant of grace which respect their salvation. What we understand by divine desertion, is God's withdrawing his comforting presence, and withholding the witness of his Spirit to the work of grace in the soul; whence arise those doubts and fears which attend the want of assurance. Thus God says to his people, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.'^a In this respect they are destitute of God's comforting presence; though at the same time they may be favoured with his supporting presence, and those powerful influences which are necessary to maintain the work of grace, which at present appears to be very weak and languishing.

The State of Believers who want Assurance.

We are thus led to consider the last thing mentioned in this Answer, namely, that, though believers are thus described, they are not left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair. This observation ought to be explained and considered with certain limitations, lest, while, on the one hand, we assert that which affords matter of encouragement to believers when they have some degree of hope, we should, on the other hand, throw discouragements in the way of others who will be apt to imagine, when they are ready to sink into despair, that what they experience is wholly inconsistent with any direct act of faith. I dare not say that no believer was ever so far deserted as to be left for a while to despair of his interest in Christ; for scripture and daily experience give us instances of some, whose conversation in many respects discovers

^a Isa. liv. 7.

them to have had the truth of grace, whom God has been pleased, for wise ends, to leave to the terror of their own thoughts, and who have remained for some time in the depths of despair; while others have gone out of the world under a cloud, concerning whom there has been ground of hope that their state was safe. It is somewhat difficult, therefore, to determine what is meant in this Answer, by a believer's being kept from sinking into utter despair. If the meaning is, that they have the supports of the Spirit of God, so as to be kept from relapsing into a state of unregeneracy, in their despairing condition, that may be easily accounted for; or, if the meaning is, that believers are not generally given up to the greatest degree of despair, especially such as is inconsistent with the exercise of any grace, that is not to be denied. I would rather say, however, that, though a believer may have despairing apprehensions concerning his state, and though the guilt of sin may lie upon him like a great weight so as to depress his spirits; yet he shall not sink into endless misery; for though darkness may continue for a night, light and joy shall come in the morning. Accordingly, though there are many who are far from having assurance, yet they are, at some times, favoured with a small glimmering of hope, which keeps them from utter despair. Again, if they are in deep despair, yet they are not so far left as not to desire grace, though they conclude themselves to be destitute of it, or not to lament the loss of those comforts and inability to exercise those graces which once they thought themselves possessed of. Further, a believer, when in a despairing way, is notwithstanding enabled, by a direct act of faith, to give himself up to Christ, though he cannot see his interest in him, and to long for those experiences and comforts which he once enjoyed; and when he is at the worst, he can say with Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'^b Moreover, in this case a person has generally such a degree of the presence of God that he is enabled to justify him in all his dealings with him, and lay the blame of all the troubles which he is under on himself; and this is attended with shame and confusion of face, self-abhorrence, and godly sorrow. Finally, despairing believers have, notwithstanding, such a presence of God with them as keeps them from abandoning his interest, or running with sinners into all excess of riot, which would give occasion to others to conclude that they never had the truth of grace.

From what has been said concerning true believers being destitute of assurance, and yet having at the same time some degree of the presence of God, we may draw several inferences. First, this is not inconsistent with what was said concerning a believer's perseverance in grace. Yet it must be considered with this limitation, that though the truth of grace shall not be lost, the comforts and evidences of it may and often are.—Again, this should put us upon circumspect walking and watchfulness against presumptuous sins, which, as was formerly observed, are often the occasion of the loss of assurance; and also on the exercise of a faith of reliance on Christ, for maintaining the acts of grace, as well as restoring its comforts.—Further, this should instruct believers what to do when destitute of the privilege of assurance. We have observed that want of assurance is attended with divine desertion, which is generally occasioned by sins committed. Therefore let us say with Job, 'Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.'^c "Let me know what are those secret sins by which I have provoked thee to leave me destitute of thy comforting presence; enable me to be affected with, and humbled for them, and unfeignedly to repent of them, and to exercise that faith in Christ which may be a means of my recovering that hope or assurance of which I am at present destitute."—Again, what has been said concerning a believer's being sometimes destitute of assurance, should put us upon sympathizing with those who are in a despairing way, and using endeavours to administer comfort to them, rather than to censure them or conclude them to be in an unregenerate state; as Job's friends did him, because the hand of God had touched him, and he was destitute of his comforting presence.—Finally, from what has been said concerning that degree of the presence of God which believers enjoy, which has a tendency to keep them from utter despair, at least from sinking into perdition, how disconsolate soever their case may be at present, we may be induced to admire the goodness and faithfulness of God in his

dealings with his people, who will not lay more on them than he will enable them to bear. Though they are comfortless and hopeless, yet they shall not be destroyed; and, in the end, they shall be satisfied with God's loving-kindness; and, when the clouds are all dispersed, they shall have a bright and glorious day in his immediate presence, where 'there is fulness of joy,' and at his 'right hand,' where 'there are pleasures for evermore.'^d

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN GLORY.

QUESTION LXXXII. *What is the communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?*

ANSWER. The communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is, in this life, immediately after death; and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.

AFTER having considered believers, or the members of the invisible church, as enjoying the privilege of union with Christ, and, as the immediate consequence of it, communion with him, it was observed that this communion is either in grace or in glory. Their communion with him in grace consists in their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, and sanctification. These have been particularly considered, together with other graces and comforts which accompany and flow from them. We are now led to speak concerning the communion which believers have with Christ in glory. This is the highest privilege they are capable of receiving. It consists in his giving them some bright discoveries of the glory which they behold and enjoy by faith in this life, and also of that which shall be immediate, and in some respects complete, after death. And, at the resurrection and day of judgment, it shall be brought, in all respects, to the utmost degree of perfection; when their joy, as well as their happiness, shall be full, and continued throughout all the ages of eternity. These are the subjects insisted on in several following Answers, which remain to be considered in this first part of the Catechism.

EARNESTS OF GLORY, AND APPREHENSIONS OF WRATH.

QUESTION LXXXIII. *What is the communion in glory, with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy in this life?*

ANSWER. The members of the invisible church have communicated to them in this life, the first-fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so, in him, are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and as an earnest thereof, enjoy the sense of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory; as, on the contrary, the sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment, are to the wicked the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death.

THERE are two sorts of persons mentioned in this Answer, namely, the righteous and the wicked, and the different condition of each of them is considered. With respect to the righteous, who are here styled 'the members of the invisible church,' there are several invaluable privileges which they are made partakers of in this life, in which they are said to have a degree of communion in glory with Christ. In particular, they have this communion in glory with Christ, as they enjoy the first-fruits or earnest of that glory which they shall have with him hereafter; as they are members of him, their head, and accordingly may be said, in some respects, to be interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and as they have a comfortable sense of his love to them, attended with peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and an hope of glory. On the other hand, we have an account of the dreadful condition of impenitent sinners, when God sets their iniquities in order

before them. This is represented in a very moving way. They are said to be filled with 'a sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment;' and these are considered as the beginning of those torments which they shall endure after death.

Earnests of Glory.

There are several invaluable privileges enjoyed by the righteous in this life, which are styled the first-fruits or earnest of glory. Though Christ has reserved the fulness of glory for his people to the time when he shall bring them to heaven; yet there are some small degrees of glory, which they enjoy in their way to it. The 'crown of righteousness,' as the apostle speaks, is 'laid up for them, which the righteous Judge shall give them at that day,'^e namely, when he shall come to judgment. Then their joy shall be full; they shall be satisfied in his likeness, and made completely blessed. Yet there are some prelibations or foretastes which they have of glory, for their support and encouragement while they are in this imperfect state. We are not to suppose, however, that the present enjoyments which believers experience in the highest degree, do fully come up to those which are reserved for them. There is a great difference as to the degree. As a child newly born has something in common with what he shall have when arrived at a state of manhood, but, in several degrees, and other circumstances, falls short of it; or as a few drops are of the same nature as the whole collection of water in the ocean, while there is a very small proportion between one and the other, so the brightest discovery of the glory of God which we are capable of enjoying in this world, or the most comfortable foretaste which believers have of heaven, falls very much short of that which they shall be possessed of when they are received into it. There are also very great alloys, and many things which tend to interrupt and abate their happiness, agreeably to the imperfection of the present state. Whatever grace they are enabled to act, though in an uncommon degree, is attended with a mixture of corruption; and as their graces are imperfect, so are the comforts that arise from them, which are interwoven with many things very afflictive. Hence, they are not what they shall be; but are travelling through this wilderness to a better country, and are exposed to many evils in their way thither.

Again, all believers do not enjoy those delights and pleasures which some are favoured with in their way to heaven. The comforts as well as the graces of the Holy Spirit, are bestowed in a way of sovereignty, to some more, and to others less. Some have reason to say with the apostle, 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.'^f Others are filled with doubts concerning their interest in him, and go mourning after him all the day; and if they have at sometimes a small glimpse of his glory, by which they conclude themselves to be, as it were, in the suburbs of heaven, they soon lose it, and find themselves to be in the valley of the shadow of death. When the disciples were with Christ at his transfiguration, which was an emblem of the heavenly blessedness, and when his 'face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light,' they had occasion to say, 'It is good for us to be here;' yet before they had done speaking, or had time to reflect on their present enjoyment, they were deprived of it by 'the cloud overshadowing them.'^g So the believer is not to expect uninterrupted communion with God, or perfect fruition of him here.

What we are at present to consider, however, is that degree of communion with God which some enjoy, which is here called the first-fruits and earnest of glory. The scripture sets it forth under both these expressions. Believers are said to receive the first-fruits of it, or as the apostle styles it, 'the first-fruits of the Spirit,'^h that is, the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost. These are the first-fruits of that blessedness which they are said to wait for, which is called 'the adoption,' that is, those privileges which God's children shall be made partakers of, or 'the glorious liberty' which they shall hereafter enjoy. The name 'first-fruits' is used in allusion to the cluster of grapes which they who were sent to spy out the land of Canaan,

^e 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^f 2 Cor. ii. 14.

^g Matt. xvii. 2—5.

^h Rom. viii. 23.

were ordered to bring to the Israelites in the wilderness, that hereby they might be encouraged in their expectation of the great plenty which was to be enjoyed when they were brought into it. Or it has reference to the feast of in-gathering before the harvest, when the Israelites were to bring the sheaf which was first to be cut down, and 'wave it before the Lord,'ⁱ with thankfulness and joy, in expectation of the full harvest, which would be the reward of the industry and labour of the husbandman. Thus believers are given not only to expect the glory of God, but to rejoice in hope of it.—Again, communion with God is also called an earnest of glory. Thus believers are said to be 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance.'^k Elsewhere likewise it is said, 'God hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit.'^l An earnest is a small sum, given in part of payment; whereby they who receive it, are encouraged to expect the whole. So a believer may conclude that as surely as he now enjoys those spiritual privileges which accompany salvation, he shall not fail of that glory of which they are an earnest. In this respect God is pleased to give his people a wonderful display of his condescending love, that they may hereby be led to know what the happiness of the heavenly state is, in a greater degree than can be learned from all the descriptions which are given of it by those who are destitute of this privilege. Heaven is the port to which every believer is bound, the reward of all those labours and difficulties which he sustains in his way to it; and to quicken him to greater diligence in pursuing after it, it is necessary that he should have his thoughts, meditation, and conversation there. The reason why God is pleased to give his people some foretastes of it, is that they may love and long for Christ's appearing, when they shall reap the full harvest of glory. Now, this earnest, prelibation, or first-fruits of the heavenly blessedness, which believers enjoy in this life, is considered in this Answer, first, as it is included in that glory which Christ is possessed of as their Head and Mediator; and secondly, as they have those graces wrought in them, and comforts flowing thence, which bear some small resemblance to what they shall hereafter be made partakers of.

1. Christ's being possessed of the heavenly blessedness, as the Head of his people, is an earnest of their salvation. For understanding this, let it be considered that our Lord Jesus sustained this character, not only in what he suffered for them that he might redeem them from the curse of the law, but in the glory which he was afterwards advanced to. Thus it is said, 'He is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'^m Accordingly, they are said to be 'risen with him,'ⁿ as regards that communion which they have with him in his resurrection. Again, when he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, his people are said 'to sit together in heavenly places in him.'^o Not that we are to suppose that they are made partakers of any branch of his mediatorial glory, or are joined with him in the work which he there performs as their exalted Head; but we are to understand, that his being considered as their representative appearing in the presence of God for them, is a foundation of their hope that they shall be brought thither at last. Hence, when he was about to depart out of this world, he gave an intimation to his people whom he left behind him that he 'went to prepare a place for them';^p and assured them that, 'because he lives, they shall live also.'^q

2. The graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, which believers are made partakers of, may also be said to be a pledge and earnest of eternal life. Heaven is a state in which that grace is brought to perfection, which at present is only begun in the soul. The beginning of it, however, affords ground of hope that it shall be completed. As a curious artist, when he draws the first lines of a picture, does not design to leave it unfinished; or he that lays the foundation of a building, determines to carry it on gradually, till he has laid the top-stone of it; so the work of grace, when begun by the Spirit, is a ground of hope that it shall not be left unfinished. As God would never have brought his people out of Egypt with an high hand and an outstretched arm, and divided the Red sea before them, if he had not designed to bring them into the promised land; so we may conclude that, when

i Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. compared with Deut. xxvi. 10, 11.

m 1 Cor. xv. 20.

n Col. iii. 1.

o Eph. ii. 6.

k Eph. i. 13, 14.

p John xiv. 3.

l 2 Cor. v. 5.

q Verse 19.

God has magnified his grace in delivering his people from the dominion of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear Son,—when he has helped them hitherto, and given them a fair and beautiful prospect of the good land to which they are going,—he will not leave his work imperfect, nor suffer them to fall and perish in the way. Christ in believers, is said to be ‘the hope of glory;’^r and the joy which they have in believing, is said to be not only ‘unspeakable,’ but ‘full of glory;’^s that is, it bears a small resemblance to that joy which they shall be filled with when brought to glory, and therefore may well be styled the earnest or first-fruits of it.

That this may farther appear, let it be considered that the happiness of heaven consists in the immediate vision and fruition of God, where the saints behold his face in light and glory,^t and enjoy all those comfortable fruits and effects arising thence, which tend to make them completely happy. Thus it is said that ‘they shall see him as he is,’^u and that ‘they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.’^x Believers, it is true, are not in all respects said to be partakers of this blessedness here; and their highest enjoyments bear but a very small proportion to it. Yet, when we speak of some as having the foretastes of it, we must consider that there is something in the lively exercise of faith and of the joy which arises from it, when believers have attained a full assurance of the love of God, and have those sensible manifestations of his comfortable presence with them, which bears some small resemblance to a life of glory. That which in some respects resembles the beatific vision, is a sight of God’s reconciled face, and of their interest by faith in all the blessings of the covenant of grace. It is true, the views which they have of the glory of God here, are not immediate, but at a distance; and therefore they are said to ‘behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.’^y We see things at a distance through a perspective glass, which enlarges the object, and brings it, as it were, near to the eye, though in reality it be at a great distance from it; and so gives us a clear discerning of that which could otherwise hardly be discovered. So faith gives us clearer views of this glory than we could have any other way. Hereby we are said ‘to see him that is invisible.’^z Thus, when God bade Moses go up to the top of Pisgah, and strengthened his sight, Moses took a view of the whole land of Canaan; though, without this strengthening of his sight, he could have beheld only a small part of it. So when God not only gives an eye of faith, but strengthens it in proportion to the views he designs it shall take of the heavenly state which lies at so great a distance, the soul is enabled to see it, and, in seeing it, has a faint emblem of the beatific vision.

Moreover, as heaven is a state in which the saints have the perfect fruition of those blessings which tend to make them completely happy; the view which a believer is enabled by faith to take of his interest in Christ, and of the glory he shall be made partaker of with him, is sometimes attended with such an ecstasy of joy and triumph, as is a kind of anticipation of that glory which he is not yet fully possessed of. Such an one is like an heir who wants but a few days of being of age; who does not look upon his estate with that distant view which he formerly did, but with the satisfaction and pleasure arising from his being ready to enter into the possession of it. Or he is like one who, after a long and tedious voyage, is within sight of his harbour, which he cannot but behold with a pleasure which very much resembles that which he shall have when he enters into it. The joy of which we speak is more than a mere hope of heaven; it is a full assurance, attended with a kind of sensation of those joys which are inexpressible, which render the believer a wonder to himself, and afford the most convincing proof to others that there is something real and substantial in the heavenly glory, which God is pleased to favour some of his people with the prelibations of. That some have enjoyed such manifestations of the divine love, and been filled with such raptures of joy, accompanying their assurance of salvation, is evident from the experience which they have had of it in some extraordinary and memorable occurrences in life, and, in other cases, at the approach of death. Of this there are multitudes of instances

^r Col. i. 27.^x Matt. xxv. 21.^s 1 Pet. i. 8.^y 2 Cor. iii. 18.^t See Quest. lxxxvi, xc.^z Heb. xi. 27.^u 1 John iii. 2.

transmitted to us in history. I shall content myself with a brief extract of some passages which we meet with in the life and death of some who appear to have had as comfortable a foretaste of the joys of heaven as it is possible for any one to have in this world.

The first I shall mention is the eminently learned and pious Dr. Rivet; who, in his last sickness, seemed to be in the very suburbs of heaven, signifying to all about him, what intimate communion he had with God, his fore-views of the heavenly state, his assurance of being admitted into it, and how earnestly he longed to be there. In the very close of his life, one who stood by him could not forbear expressing himself to this effect: "I cannot but think that he is now enjoying the vision of God." This gave him occasion to signify, as well as he was able to express himself, that it was so. The account of this and of much more to the same purpose, is not only mentioned by the author of his last hours, but is taken notice of in a public funeral oration, occasioned by his death.^a

A very worthy writer,^b speaking concerning that excellent servant of Christ, Mr. Rutherford, recites some of his last words, which are very remarkable: "I shall shine, I shall see him as he is, and all the fair company with him, and shall have my large share. It is no easy thing to be a Christian; but as for me, I have got the victory, and Christ is holding forth his arms to embrace me. I have had my fears and faintings, as another sinful man, to be carried through creditably; but as sure as ever he spake to me in his word, his Spirit witnessed to my heart, saying, Fear not. He had accepted my suffering, and the outgate should not be matter of prayer, but of praise." A little before his death, after some fainting, he said, "Now, I feel, I believe, I enjoy, I rejoice, I feed on manna, I have angels' food, my eyes shall see my Redeemer; I know that he shall stand, at the latter day, on the earth, and I shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air. I sleep in Christ; and when I awake I shall be satisfied with his likeness; O for arms to embrace him!" To one who was speaking concerning his laboriousness in the ministry, he cried out, "I disclaim all. The port I would be in at, is redemption and forgiveness of sins through his blood." Thus, full of the Spirit, yea, as it were, overcome with sensible enjoyment, he breathes out his soul, his last words being these: "Glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land."

I may add the account given of that great man Dr. Goodwin, in some memoirs of his life, composed out of his own papers published by his son;^c who intimates that he rejoiced in the thoughts that he was dying, and going to have a full and uninterrupted communion with God. "I am going," said he, "to the three Persons with whom I have had communion. They have taken me; I did not take them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. All my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not be here; those croaking toads will fall off in a moment." Referring to the great examples of faith mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, he said, "All these died in faith. I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour; no, I could never have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No, I have the whole of his righteousness; I am found in him, not in my own righteousness, which is of the law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than he doth. I think I cannot love Christ better than I do. I am swallowed up

^a Vid. Dauberi orat. Funeh. ad front. et Hor. Noviss. ad calc. Tom. 3. Riveti operum: in which he is represented as saying, "Nolite mei causâ dolere, ultima hæc momenta nihil habent funesti; corpus languet quidem, at anima robore et consolatione plena est, nec impedit paries iste intergerinus, nebula ista exigua, quò minus lucem Dei videam. Atque exinde magis magisque optavit dissolvi et cum Christo esse. Sufficit mi Deus exclamabat subinde, sufficit, suscipe animam meam: Non tamen moram impatienter fero. Expecto, credo, persevero, dimoveri nequeo, Dei Spiritus meo spiritui testatur, me ex filiis suis esse: O amorem ineffabilem! id quod sentio, omnem expressionem altè transcendit. Veni Domine Jesu, veni, etenim deficio, non quidem impatiens Domine, sed anima mea respicit te ut terra sicca. Preces et votum, ut Deus Paradisum aperiret, et huic fideli servo suo faciem suam ostenderet; his verbis supplevit; cum animabus justorum sanctificatis; Amen, Amen. Exinde linguâ præpeditâ verbo affirmare; mox ad vocem adstantium, ipsum jam visionem Dei frui, annuere; paulo post sub mediam decimam matutinam placide in Domino obdormiit."

^b See Fleming's Fulfilling of the Scripture, in fol. Part I. page 187.

^c See Dr. Goodwin's works, vol. v. in his life, page 19.

in God." Then he added, "Now shall I ever be with the Lord." With this assurance of faith and fulness of joy, his soul left this world, and went to see and enjoy the reality of that blessed state of glory.

There is also an account, in the life and death of Mr. John Janeway, of the great assurance and joy which he had in his last sickness, in which he expresses himself to this purpose: "I am, through mercy, quite above the fears of death, and am going unto him whom I love above life. O that I could but let you know what I now feel! O that I could show you what I see! O that I could express the thousandth part of that sweetness which now I find in Christ! you would all then think it worth the while to make it your business to be religious. O my dear friends, you little think what a Christ is worth upon a death-bed! I would not, for a world, nay, for millions of worlds, be now without a Christ and a pardon. O the glory, the unspeakable glory, that I behold! My heart is full, my heart is full; Christ smiles and I cannot choose but smile. Can you find in your heart to stop me, who am now going to the complete and eternal enjoyment of Christ? Would you keep me from my crown? The arms of my blessed Saviour are open to embrace me; the angels stand ready to carry my soul into his bosom. O did you but see what I see, you would all cry out with me, How long, dear Lord! come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Or why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?" Much more to the same purpose may be found in the life of that excellent man, which is exceedingly affecting.

There is another who does not come short of him in his death-bed triumphs.^d He says concerning himself, "Death is not terrible; it is unstinged; the curse of the fiery law is done away. I bless his name I have found him; I am taken up in blessing him; I am dying rejoicing in the Lord; I long to be in the promised land; I wait for thy salvation. How long! Come sweet Lord Jesus, take me by the hand; I wait for thy salvation, as the watchman watcheth for the morning; I am weary with delays; I faint for thy salvation. Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? What means he to stay so long? I am like to faint with delays." Afterwards he said, "O Sirs, I could not believe that I could have borne, and borne cheerfully, this rod so long. This is a miracle, pain without pain. And this is not a fancy of man disordered in his brain, but of one lying in full composure. O blessed be God that ever I was born. O if I were where he is! And yet, for all this, God's withdrawing from me would make me weak as water. All this I enjoy, though it be miracle upon miracle, would not make me stand without new supply from God. The thing I rejoice in is, that God is altogether full, and that in the Mediator Christ Jesus, there is all the fulness of the Godhead, and it will never run out. I am wonderfully helped beyond the power of nature. Though my body be sufficiently teased, yet my spirit is untouched." Much more to this purpose we have in the account of the latter part of his life. But I shall close with one thing which is very remarkable. When he was apprehensive that he was very near his death he said, "When I fall so low that I am not able to speak, I'll show you a sign of triumph, when I am near glory, if I be able." This accordingly he did, by lifting up his hands, and clapping them together, when he was speechless, and in the agonies of death.

Many more instances might have been given to illustrate our argument. But from those which have been given it will evidently appear that God is pleased sometimes to deal familiarly with men, by giving them extraordinary manifestations of his presence, before he brings them into the immediate enjoyment of himself in heaven,—manifestations which may be well called an earnest or prelibation of it.^e The instances which we have narrated may serve also as a farther illustration of

^d See the Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Halyburton, cap. 6.

^e See this argument improved by Mr. Fleming, in his Fulfilling of the Scripture, edit. in fol. page 394, et seq. He there takes several remarkable passages out of Melchior Adam's Lives, and gives several instances of that extraordinary communion which some have had with God, both in life and death; whose conversation was well known in Scotland; so that he mentions it as what is a matter undeniably true. He also relates other things concerning the assurance and joy which some have had; which has afforded them the sweetest comforts in prisons and dungeons, and given them a foretaste of heaven when they have been called to suffer death for Christ's sake.

an argument formerly insisted on^f to prove that assurance of God's love is attainable in this life. This assurance, as it may be observed, is accompanied with the lively acts of faith, by which it appears to be well grounded; so that, as the apostle says, 'The God of hope' is pleased to 'fill them with all joy and peace in believing,' whereby they 'abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.'^g In this respect it may be said, to use the prophet's words, that 'they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.'^h The joy they experience is like the appearing of the morning-star, which ushers in a bright and glorious day, and gives a full discovery to themselves and others, that there is much of heaven enjoyed in the way to it, by those whom God delights to honour. Thus concerning the communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church sometimes enjoy in this life.

Apprehensions of Wrath.

We shall now consider the miserable condition of the wicked in this life, when God is provoked, as a sin-revenging Judge, to fill them with a sense of his wrath. From this arise horror of conscience and a fearful expectation of judgment; which, as is observed in the latter part of this Answer, are the beginning of those torments which they shall endure after death. We have many instances in scripture of the punishment of sin in this world, in those whom God is said 'to reprove,' and before whose eyes he sets their iniquities in order.ⁱ This fills them with horror of conscience,^k and leaves them in utter despair. They once thought themselves in a prosperous condition, and it was said concerning them, 'Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish;'^l but their end was terrible, for they were 'set in slippery places,' being 'cast down into destruction, brought into desolation as in a moment, and utterly consumed with terrors.'^m

We have a sad instance of this in Cain, after he had slain his brother, and had fallen under the curse of God, whereby he was sentenced to be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth. He separated himself indeed from the presence of the Lord, and the place in which he was worshipped; but he could not flee from the terrors of his own thoughts, or get any relief under the uneasiness of a guilty conscience. He hence feared that he should be slain by the hand of every one who met him, and complained, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.'ⁿ Some understand the words of Lamech in the same sense when he says, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold.'^o The wrath of God was also denounced against Pashur; as it is said, 'The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib; for thus saith the Lord, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends.'^p Judas, likewise, after he had betrayed our Saviour, was filled with the terrors of an accusing conscience, which forced him to confess, not as a believing penitent, but as a despairing criminal, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood;' after which it is said, 'He departed, and went and hanged himself.'^q Nothing is more terrible than this remorse of conscience, which renders sinners inexpressibly miserable. It is a punishment inflicted on those who sin wilfully, presumptuously, and obstinately against the checks of conscience, the rebukes of providence, and various warnings to the contrary, who treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. They are 'contentious, and do not obey the truth,' that is, they are so far from obeying it, that they persecute and oppose it; and on the other hand, they 'obey unrighteousness.' To these belong, as the apostle says, 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.'^r Not only does this punishment wait for them as 'laid up in store, and sealed up among God's treasures, to whom vengeance belongeth;'^s but they are made to taste the bitterness of that cup which shall afterwards be poured forth without mixture. In this world 'their eyes shall see their destruction,' and afterwards 'they shall drink of

See Sect. 'The Attainableness of Assurance,' under Quest. lxxx.

h Isa. ix. 3.

i Psal. l. 21.

k See vol. i. page 355.

g Rom. xv. 13.

m Psal. lxxiii. 18, 19.

n Gen. iv. 13.

o Gen. iv. 23, 24.

l Psal. lxxiii. 7.

q Matt. xxvii. 4, 5.

r Rom. ii. 5, 8, 9.

s Deut. xxxii. 34, 35.

p Jer. xx. 3, 4.

the wrath of the Almighty.^t This is a most affecting subject. How awful a thing is it to see a person surrounded with miseries, and, at the same time, shut up in darkness, and left destitute of hope! With what horror and anguish was the soul of Saul filled, when he uttered that doleful complaint, 'I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me!'^u Much more dreadful is it for a person to apprehend himself to have fallen into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire; and to have nothing left but the fearful expectation of future judgment, and an abyss of woes which will ensue. These are the evils which some endure in this life; and they are no less terrible to them, than the comfortable foretastes of the love of God are joyful to the saints.

Practical Inferences from the Different Prospects of the Righteous and the Wicked.

From this different view of the end of the wicked, and that of the righteous, many useful instructions may be learned.

1. When we consider the wicked as distressed with the afflicting sense of what they feel, and with the dread of that wrath which they would fain flee from but cannot, we may infer that a state of unregeneracy, whatever advantages may attend it as to the outward blessings of common providence, is a very sad and deplorable condition, far from being the object of choice to those who duly consider its consequences. The present amusements which arise from the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, whence the sinner concludes himself to be happy, afford the most miserable instance of self-deceit, and will appear to do so, if we consider the end of them, or that 'the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment,'^x and that then nothing shall remain but what shall wound his spirit, and make his misery intolerable.

Again, when we meet with instances of persons sunk in the depths of despair, and tormenting themselves with the fore-views of hell and destruction, let their case be a warning to others to flee from the wrath to come. I would not be peremptory in passing a judgment on the state of those who apprehend themselves to be irretrievably lost, and feel those terrors in their consciences which no tongue can express. A person can hardly read the account of the despair of poor Spira, soon after the Reformation, and how much his sentiments concerning himself resembled the punishment of sin in hell, without trembling. He was, indeed, a sad instance of the wrath of God breaking in upon conscience; and is set up as a monument to warn others to take heed of apostasy. In his case, and in others of a similar kind, we have a convincing proof of the reality of a future state of misery, or that the punishment of sin in hell is not an ungrounded fancy. It is not for us, however, to enter into those secrets which belong not to us, or to reckon him among the damned in another world, because he reckoned himself among them in this. As to any others whom we may see in similar circumstances, we are not so much to pass a judgment concerning their future state, as to infer the desperate estate of sinners when left of God, and to bless him that this is not our case. On the other hand, let not unregenerate sinners think that they are safe, merely because their consciences are quiet, or rather stupid; for the false peace which they have is no better than 'the hope of the hypocrite,' which 'shall perish' and be 'cut off.' And his 'trust shall be as a spider's web,' if he continue in his present condition.

2. From what has been said concerning the happiness of the righteous, in the enjoyment they have of the first-fruits of the heavenly glory, we may attain farther conviction that there is a state of complete blessedness reserved for the saints in another world. For, besides the proofs of this which we have from scripture, we have others founded in experience, so far as it is possible for any to attain the joys of heaven before they go thither. Though the instances of this we have mentioned are uncommon, yet our inference from them is just,—and may afford matter of conviction to those who are wholly taken up with earthly things, and have no taste of nor delight in things spiritual,—that religion has its own rewards, and that a believer is the only happy man in the world.

^t Job xxi. 20.

^u 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

^x Job xx. 5.

Again, the happy experience on the part of many of the earnest of glory, may serve as an encouraging motive to induce Christians to hold on their way. Whatever difficulties or distressing providences they may meet with in this life, if they have the earnest and foretastes of heaven at any time, these will make their afflictions seem light, inasmuch as they work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If they are rather waiting and hoping for them, than actually enjoying them, let them adore and depend on the sovereignty of God, who dispenses these comforts when he pleases. If they are destitute of the joy of faith, let them endeavour to be found in the lively exercise of the direct acts of it, trusting in Christ, though they have not such sensible communion with him as others have; and let them bless God that, though they have not those foretastes of the heavenly glory which accompany a full assurance of it, they have a quiet, composed frame of spirit, and are not given up to desponding thoughts, or unbelieving fears, and have ground to conclude that, though their state is not so comfortable as that of others, yet it is not less safe, and shall at last bring them to the fruition of that felicity which others have the first-fruits of.

Finally, let those who are at any time favoured with the privilege of assurance, and the joy which arises from it, walk very humbly with God, sensible that this frame of spirit is not owing to themselves, but to the quickening and sealing influences of the Holy Ghost, and that if, by neglecting to depend on him for the continuance of it, we provoke him to leave us to ourselves, we shall soon lose it, and be left in darkness. As without him we can do nothing, so without his continued presence we can enjoy none of those privileges which tend to make our lives comfortable, and give us an anticipation of future glory.

DEATH.

QUESTION LXXXIV. *Shall all men die?*

ANSWER. Death being threatened as the wages of sin, it is appointed unto all men once to die; for that all have sinned.

QUESTION LXXXV. *Death being the wages of sin, why are not the righteous delivered from death, seeing all their sins are forgiven in Christ?*

ANSWER. The righteous shall be delivered from death itself at the last day, and even in death are delivered from the sting and curse of it; so that, although they die, yet it is out of God's love, to free them perfectly from sin and misery, and to make them capable of farther communion with Christ in glory, which they then enter upon.

IN these Answers we have, first, an account of the unalterable purpose of God, or his appointment that all men once must die, and death is considered also as the wages of sin; next, it is supposed that death has a sting and curse attending it with respect to some; and thirdly, it is stated to be the peculiar privilege of the righteous, that though they shall not be delivered from death, yet death shall redound to their advantage. The reasons of this privilege are stated to be, first, that the sting and curse of death is taken from them; and secondly, that, in three respects, their dying is the result of God's love to them,—as they are thereby freed from sin and misery,—as they are made capable of farther communion with Christ in glory, beyond what they can have in this world,—and as they shall immediately enter upon that glorious and blessed state when they die.

The Certainty of Death.

God has determined, by an unalterable purpose and decree, that all men must die. Whatever different sentiments persons may have about other things, this remains an uncontested truth. We have as much reason to conclude that we shall leave the world, as at present we have that we live in it. 'I know,' says Job, 'that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' On

y Job xxx. 23.

this account the psalmist says, 'I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.'^z Even if scripture had been wholly silent about the frailty of man, daily experience would have afforded a sufficient proof of it. We have much said concerning man's mortality in the writings of the heathen; but they are at a loss to determine the origin or cause of it. They hence consider it as the unavoidable consequence of the frame of nature arising from its contexture; that which is formed out of the dust must be resolved into its first principle, or that which is composed of flesh and blood cannot but be liable to corruption. But we have this matter set in a true light in scripture, which considers death as the consequence of man's apostasy at first from God. Before this he was immortal, and would have always remained so, had he not violated the covenant in which the continuance of his immortality was secured to him. The care of providence would have prevented a dissolution, either from the decays of nature, or from any external means leading to it. Hence, some of the Socinian writers have been very bold in contradicting the express account we have in scripture of the origin of death, when they assert that death was at first the consequence of nature.^a But for this reason man would have been liable to it though he had not sinned; whereas the apostle says, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'^b We have a particular account of this in the sentence God passed on our first parents immediately after their fall; when, having denounced a curse upon the ground for their sake, he says, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'^c It may be observed, also, that as death is unavoidable, pursuant to the decree of God; so the constitution of our nature, as well as the external dispensations of providence, lead to it. The sentence no sooner took place than the temperament of human bodies was altered.^d The jarring principles of nature, on the due temperament of which life and health depend, could not but have a tendency by degrees to destroy the bodily frame. If there be too great a confluence of humours, or a defect of them; if heat or cold immoderately prevail; if the circulation of the blood and juices be too swift or slow, or the motion of the animal spirits too violent, or in the least impeded; diseases of different kinds will necessarily ensue. Or if the food on which we live, or the air which we breathe, be not agreeable to the constitution of our nature, or any external violence be offered to it, the frame of nature will be weakened, and dissolution brought on. David, speaking concerning Saul, includes the various means by which men die, in three general Heads, 'The Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish.' 'The Lord shall smite him,'^e denotes a person's dying by a sudden stroke of providence, in which there is the more immediate hand of God; and his 'falling in battle,' denotes a violent death by the hands of men. In both these respects, men die before that time which they might have lived to, according to the course of nature; and 'his day coming to die,' means a person's dying what we call a natural death. When the dissolution of the frame of nature is gradual, or when nature is so spent and wasted that it can no longer subsist by all the skill of physicians or the virtue of medicine, then the soul leaves its habitation, being no longer able to perform any of the functions of life.

We might here consider those diseases which are the forerunners of death. These are sometimes more acute; and by means of them, as one elegantly expresses it, nature feels the cruel victory before it yields to the enemy. As a ship which is tossed by a mighty tempest, and by the concussion of the winds and waves loses its rudder and masts, takes water in at every part, and gradually sinks into the ocean; so in the shipwreck of nature, the body is so shaken and weakened by the violence of disease, that the senses, the animal and vital operations, decline, and at last are extinguished in death.^f This seemed so formidable to good Hezekiah, that he uttered this mournful complaint, 'Mine age is departed, and removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I

^z Psal. xxxix. 12.

^a Sequela naturæ.

^b Rom. v. 12.

^c Gen. iii. 19.

^d Before this there was what some call 'temperamentum ad pondus,' which was lost by sin; and a broken constitution, leading to mortality, ensued.

^e 1 Sam. xxvi. 10.

^f See Dr. Bates on Death, chap. ii.

reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.^g

We might also consider the empire of death as universal. The wise man says, 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh;^h and then they pass away also, like the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Death spares none; the strongest constitution can no more withstand its stroke than the weakest; no age or man is exempted from it. This is beautifully described by Job: 'One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul; and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.'ⁱ

We might also consider the body after death, as a prey for worms, the seat of corruption; and lodged in the grave, the house appointed for all living. Then an end is put to all the actions, as well as enjoyments of this life; and, as the psalmist says, 'In that very day' all 'their thoughts perish.'^k Whatever they have been projecting, whatever schemes they have laid, either for themselves or others, are all broken. So the historian observes concerning the Roman emperor, that when he had formed great designs for the advantage of the empire,^l death broke all his measures, and prevented the execution of them.

We might also consider death as putting an end to our present enjoyments, removing us from the society of our dearest friends to a dismal and frightful solitude. This was one of the consequences of it which was very afflictive to Hezekiah, when he said, 'I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.'^m It also strips us of all our possessions, and all the honours we have been advanced to in this world. The psalmist says, 'When he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him.'ⁿ

We might also consider the time of life and death, as being in God's hand. As we were brought into the world by the sovereignty of his providence; so we are called out of it at his pleasure. 'Our times are in his hand.'^o Hence, as nothing is more certain than death, nothing is more uncertain to us than the time when. This God has concealed from us for wise ends. Did we know that we should soon die, it would discourage us from attempting any thing great in life; and did we know that the lease of life was long, and that we should certainly arrive at old age, we might take occasion to delay all concern about our soul's welfare, presuming that it should be time enough to think of the affairs of religion and another world, when we should apprehend ourselves to be near death. Hence, God, by concealing from us the time of our departure from this world, has made it our wisdom, as well as our duty, to be waiting all the days of our appointed time, till our change come.

From what has been said under this Head, we may learn the vanity of man as mortal. If, indeed, we look on believers as enjoying that happiness which lies beyond the grave, there is a very different view of things; but as to what respects this world, we have reason to say as the psalmist does, 'Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.'^p We may see the vanity of all those honours and carnal pleasures which many pursue with so much eagerness, as though they had nothing else to mind, nothing to make provision for but the flesh; which they do at the expense of that which is in itself most excellent and desirable.—We may infer, also, that the certainty of death affords an undeniable and universal motive to humility. Death knows no distinction of persons, regards the rich no more than the poor, puts no mark of distinction between the remains of a prince and those of a peasant, and not only takes away every thing which men value themselves upon, but levels the highest part of mankind with common dust. They who boast of their extraction, descent, and kindred, are obliged with Job to 'say to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.'^q Shall we be proud of our habitations, 'who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust?'^r Are any proud of their youth and beauty? These are at best but like a

g Isa. xxxviii. 12, 13.

h Eccles. i. 4.

i Job xxi. 23—26.

k Psal. cxlvi. 4.

l Vid. Seuton. in Vit. Jul. Cæs. Talia agentem atque meditantem mors prævenit.

m Isa. xxxviii. 11.

n Psal. xlix. 17.

o Psal. xxxi. 15.

p Psal. xxxix. 5.

q Job xvii. 14.

r Chap. iv. 19.

flower which does not abide long in its bloom, and, when cut down, withers. The finest features are not only spoiled by death, but rendered unpleasant and ghastly to behold; and accordingly are removed out of sight, and laid in the grave.—Again, from the consideration of man's liability to death, and those diseases which lead to it as the wages of sin, we may infer that sin is a bitter and formidable evil. The cause is to be judged of by its effects. As death, accompanied with all those diseases which are the forerunners of it, is the greatest natural evil to which we are liable; so sin, whence it took its rise, must be the greatest moral evil. We should never reflect on the one, without lying low before God under a sense of the other. The psalmist, when meditating on his own mortality, traces it to its spring, and ascribes it to those 'rebukes' with which 'God corrects men for their iniquities,' so that they die, and their 'beauty consumes away like a moth.'^s Elsewhere, also, when he compares the life of man to 'the grass which in the morning flourisheth, and groweth up, and in the evening is cut down and withereth,' he immediately adds, 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.'^t When Hezekiah had an intimation of his recovery, after he had the sentence of death within himself, he speaks of his deliverance from 'the pit of corruption'^u as accompanied with God's 'casting all his sins behind his back.' And since we cannot be delivered from these sad effects of sin till the frame of nature is dissolved and afterwards rebuilt, our liability to death should put us upon using proper methods by which we may be freed from the guilt and dominion of sin; and accordingly should have a tendency in us to promote a life of holiness.—Finally, from the uncertainty of life, let us be induced to improve our present time, and endeavour so to live that, when God calls us hence, we may be ready. We ought to pray with the psalmist, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom';^x that, by this means, that which deprives us of all earthly enjoyments, may give us an admission into a better world, and be the gate to eternal life.

The Sting and Curse of Death.

We are now led to consider that death, with respect to some, has a sting and curse annexed to it. The apostle expressly says, 'The sting of death is sin.'^y As sin brought death into the world; so it is the guilt of it lying on the consciences of men, which is the principal thing that makes them afraid to leave the world. Not that death is in itself an evil which nature cannot think of without some reluctance. The apostle Paul, when he expressed his assurance of happiness in another world, which he 'groaned' after, and 'earnestly' longed to be possessed of; yet had it been put to his choice, would have wished that he could have been 'clothed upon with his house which is from heaven';^z that is, had it been the will of God that he might have been brought to heaven without going the way of all the earth, he would have felt this more agreeable to nature. But when the two evils of death meet together, namely, that which is abhorrent to nature, and the sting which makes it much more formidable, they constitute an evil beyond measure distressing. In this Answer the sting and curse of death are put together, as implying the same thing. It is that whereby a person apprehends himself liable to the condemning sentence of the law, separated from God, and excluded from his favour; so that death appears to him to be the beginning of sorrows. This view of death is what tends to embitter it, and fills him with dread and horror at the thoughts of it.

Death an Advantage to Believers.

We now proceed to show that it is the peculiar privilege of the righteous, that though they shall not be delivered from death, yet it shall redound to their advantage. That they shall not be exempted from death, is evident; because the decree of God relating to it extends to all men. We read, indeed, of two who escaped the

^s Psal. xxxix. 11.
^y 1 Cor. xv. 25.

^t Psal. xc. 6, 8.
^z 2 Cor. v. 2.

^u Isa. xxxviii. 17.

^x Psal. xc. 12.

grave, namely, Enoch, who was translated that he should not see death, and Elijah, who was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot. But these were extraordinary instances, not designed as precedents by which we may judge of the common lot of believers. The saints who shall be found alive at Christ's second coming, shall undergo a change,^a which, though equivalent to death, cannot properly be styled a dying. The apostle opposes it to death, when he says, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ;'^b and he speaks of it as a future dispensation of providence, which does not immediately concern us in the present age. We must not conclude, therefore, that believers are delivered from the stroke of death. Nevertheless, death is ordered for their good. The apostle says, with a particular application to himself, 'For me to die is gain ;'^c and when he speaks of the many blessings which believers have in possession or in reversion, he says, 'Death is yours,' as if he had said, 'It shall redound to your advantage.'

1. The sting of death is taken away from them. This is the result of their being in a justified state. For as a person's being liable to the condemning sentence of the law is the principal thing which has a tendency to make him uneasy, and may be truly called the sting which wounds the conscience ; so a sense of his interest in forgiveness through the blood of Christ, tends to give peace to it. A person who has this sense of interest in forgiveness can say, 'Who shall lay any thing to my charge ? It is God that justifieth ;' or, 'Though I have contracted guilt, which renders me unworthy of his favour, yet I am persuaded that this guilt is removed ; so that iniquity shall not be my ruin, and even death itself shall bring me to the possession of those blessings which were purchased for me by the blood of Christ, and which I have been enabled to apply to myself by faith. With this confidence he can say with the apostle, 'O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?'^d

2. Their dying is an instance of God's love to them. As those whom Christ is said to have 'loved in the world, he loved unto the end' of his life ; so he loves them to the end of theirs.^e And as nothing has hitherto separated them from this love, nothing shall be able to do it. There are three particulars in which the love of God to dying believers discovers itself.

First, they are freed from sin and misery. This they never will nor can be till death. As for sin, there are the remains of it in the best of men, which give them great disturbance, and occasion for the daily conflict which there is between the flesh and the spirit. But at death the conflict will be at an end, and the victory which they shall attain over it complete. There shall be no law in the members warring against the law of the mind ; no propensity or inclination to what is evil ; nor any guilt or defilement contracted ; which would be inconsistent with a state of perfect holiness. Moreover, as the state to which they are introduced is one of perfect happiness, there is an entire freedom from all those miseries which sin brought into this lower world. These are either internal or external, personal or relative ; none of which shall occur to allay, or give any disturbance to, the saints' blessedness after death. But more of this will be considered under a following Answer ; in which we shall be led to speak of the happiness of the righteous at the day of judgment, both in soul and body.^f

Again, the death of a believer appears to be an instance of divine love, as it is the means of his being made capable of farther communion with Christ in glory. Persons must be made meet for heaven before they are admitted to it. Our present season and day of grace, indeed, is a time in which God is training his people up for glory ; and there is a habitual preparation for it, when the work of grace is begun. This is what the apostle intends, when he speaks of some who, when they were translated into Christ's kingdom, were 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'^g This, however, falls very short of that actual meetness which the saints must have when they are brought to take possession of the heavenly blessedness. Then, as will be observed in the next Answer, they shall be made perfect in holiness ; for were it otherwise, there could be no per-

a See more of this in Quest. lxxxvii.

d 1 Cor. xv. 55.

e John xiii. 1.

b 1 Cor. xv. 51.

f See Quest. xc.

c Phil. i. 21.

g Col. i. 12.

fect happiness. Besides, the soul must be more enlarged than it can be here, that it may be enabled to receive the immediate discoveries of the divine glory, and to converse with the heavenly inhabitants. The frame of nature must be changed; which is what the apostle intends when he says, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.'^h Accordingly he adds, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'ⁱ Here he intimates that frail, mortal, and corruptible man, is not able to bear that glory which is reserved for a state of immortality. The soul; therefore, must be so changed as to be rendered receptive of that glory; and, in order to its being so, all its powers and faculties must be greatly enlarged; otherwise it could no more receive the immediate rays of the divine glory, than the weak and distempered eye can look steadily on the sun shining in its meridian brightness. In this world our ideas of divine things are very imperfect, by reason of the narrowness of our capacities, and God condescends to reveal himself to us in proportion to this; but when the saints shall see him as he is, or have a perfect and immediate vision and fruition of his glory, they shall be made receptive of it. This is done at death; and then they are rendered capable of farther communion with Christ in glory.

Finally, at death believers immediately enter upon, and are admitted into, the possession of this glory. At the same time that the soul is enlarged and fitted for the work and enjoyment of heaven, it is received into it; where it shall have an uninterrupted communion with Christ in glory. This is the subject insisted on in the following Answer.

THE FUTURE STATE.

QUESTION LXXXVI. *What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?*

ANSWER. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which, even in death, continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls: Whereas the souls of the wicked are at death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgment of the great day.

HAVING considered the soul as separated from the body by death, the next thing which will be inquired into, is what becomes of it, and how it is disposed of, in its separate state. Here we find that there is a vast difference between the righteous and the wicked. The former have communion with Christ in glory; the latter are in a state of banishment and separation from him, being cast into hell, and there remaining in torments and utter darkness. Both these subjects are particularly insisted on in this Answer. In considering them, we shall observe the following method;—First, we shall notice that there is something supposed, namely, that the soul of man is immortal, otherwise it could not be capable of happiness or misery. Secondly, we shall consider the happiness which the members of the invisible church enjoy,—called 'communion with Christ in glory.' Lastly, we shall consider the misery which the souls of the wicked endure at death; which is stated in the latter part of the Answer.

The Immortality of the Soul.

Here we shall speak concerning the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that the soul of man is immortal. This is a subject of so much importance, that we must be convinced of the truth of it, before we can conclude that there is a state of happiness or misery in another world. But before we proceed to the proof of it, it is necessary for us to explain what we are to understand by it. We read in scrip-

ture of the death of the soul, in a spiritual sense; as separated by sin from God, the fountain of life and blessedness; and as being destitute of a principle of grace, and in consequence, as utterly indisposed to perform any actions which are spiritually good, as a dead man is unable to perform the functions of life. In this sense we are to understand the apostle's words, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.'^k In regard to it, unregenerate persons are said to be 'dead in trespasses and sins';^l and a condemned state, which is the consequence of it, is a state of death. Now that which is opposed to this is called in scripture a spiritual life, or immortality. This, however, is not the sense in which we are to consider the life of the soul in our present argument.—Again, immortality may be considered as an attribute peculiar to God. Thus the apostle says, 'He only hath immortality.'^m The meaning of this is, that his life, which includes his Being and all his perfections, is necessary and independent. But in this respect no creature is immortal; their life is maintained by the will and providence of God, which gave being to it at first.—When we speak of creatures being immortal, we must either consider them as not having in the constitution of their nature any thing which tends to a dissolution, which cannot be effected by any second cause; or we must consider their eternal existence as resulting from the will of God, who could, had he pleased, have annihilated them. It is in both these senses that we are to consider the immortality of the soul.

That it is in its own nature immortal, has been allowed by many of the heathens, who have had just conceptions of the spirituality of its nature, and paid any due regards to the providence of God, and those marks of distinction which he puts between good and bad men, as the consequence of their behaviour in this life. That the soul survives the body, has been reckoned by some of the heathens an opinion which has almost universally obtained in the world.ⁿ Thus Plato introduces Socrates^o as discoursing largely on this subject, immediately before his death; and in others of his writings, he not only asserts this doctrine, but gives as good proofs of it as any one destitute of scripture-light could do. One of his followers, in the account he gives of the doctrine as taught by him, recommends and insists on argument which he brings to prove it, which is not without its weight, namely, that the soul acts from a principle seated in its own nature, and not by the influence of some external cause, as things material do.^p Strabo also speaks of the ancient Brahmins among the Indians, as entertaining some notions of the immortality of the soul, and of the judgment passed upon it in its separate state; agreeably to what Plato advances on that subject.^q Some, indeed, have thought that this notion took its rise from Thales, the Milesian, who lived between two and three hundred years before Plato, and about six hundred years before the Christian era. They ascribe the notion to him from an occasional passage mentioned by Diogenes Laertius in his life, which he brings in only as matter of report,^r and which is hardly sufficient to justify the supposition. Cicero^s supposes it was first propagated by Pherecydes, who was contemporary with him; though Diogenes Laertius makes no mention of such a fact. It may be inferred, however, from many things in Homer, the oldest writer in the Greek tongue, who lived above three hundred years before Thales, that the world had in his time entertained some confused ideas of the immortality of the soul. For we often find him bringing in the souls of his deceased heroes, appearing to their surviving friends in a form and speaking with a voice like that which they had when living; and he not only supposes, but plainly

^k 1 Tim. v. 6.

^l Eph. ii. 1.

^m 1 Tim. vi. 16.

ⁿ Vid. Senec. Epist. 117. Cum de animarum immortalitate loquimur, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus hominum, aut timentium inferos, aut colentium. Utor hac persuasione publica. Et Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. i. Permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium; qua in sede maneant, qualesque sint ratione discendum est.

^o In Phæd.

^p Vid. Alein. de Doct. Plat. cap. xxv. Αυτοκίνητον δὲ φησὶ τὴν ψυχὴν; ὅτι συμφυτὸν ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν, αἱ ἐνεργοῦσαν καθ' αὐτήν.

^q Vid. Strab. Geog. lib. xv. Παραπλεουσὶ δὲ καὶ μυθοὺς. ὥσπερ καὶ πλατὼν περὶ τὴν ἀφθαρσίας ψυχῆς, καὶ τῶν καθ' ἄδου κρίσεων, καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, περὶ μὲν τῶν Βραχμάνων ταῦτα λέγει.

^r Vid. Diog. Laert. in Vit. Thal.

^s Vid. Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i.

intimates, that their souls existed in a separate state.^t In other places, also, he represents some suffering punishment for their crimes committed on earth ;^u which plainly argues, whatever fabulous account we have of the nature of the punishment, or the person suffering it, that it was an opinion generally received at that time, that the soul existed in a separate state. Indeed, this may be inferred from the doctrine of demons, or the superstitious worship which the heathens paid to the souls of those heroes who formerly lived on earth, who, as they thought, had done some things which rendered them the peculiar favourites of God, and the objects of worship by men, and whose souls, as they believed, existed with God in great honour and favour in a separate state.^x

But passing this by, it may be farther observed that whatever notions some of the heathens had of the immortality of the soul in general, they were very much at a loss, many of them, in determining the place, or many things relating to the state, in which they were. Hence, many asserted, with Pythagoras, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or of their passing from one body to another, and being condemned to reside in vile and dishonourable bodies, as a punishment for sins committed in former bodies. This doctrine, though it perverts, yet does not overthrow, that of the soul's immortality. Others of the heathen seemed to doubt whether, after four or five courses of transmigration of souls from one body to another, they might not at last shrivel into nothing. It must also be acknowledged that there was a considerable party among them who adhered to the sentiments of Epicurus, who denied the immortality of the soul, supposing it to be material. The Sadducees likewise are represented, in scripture, as imbibing that notion ; they are said to have 'denied both angels and spirits.'^y In this respect they adopted Epicurus' philosophy, as to his denying the immortality of the soul, or its existence in a future state.^z

We may observe, however, that notwithstanding all that has been said concerning this doctrine, by the better and wiser part of the heathen in their writings, their notions seem to have been very defective. If we trace them farther than

^t Vid. Hom. Iliad 23. lin. 65, et seq.

ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Πατρόκληος δειλοῖο,
 Παντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθος τε καὶ ὀμματα καλὰ εἰκυῖα,
 Καὶ φωνὴν καὶ τοιαῖα περὶ χροὶ εἴματα ἔστο
 Στῆ δ' ἄρ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς, καὶ μιν πρὸς μύθον εἰπεν.

Here, after he had killed Hector, he addresses himself to his friend Patroclus, signifying that he had done this to revenge his death ; on which, the poet brings in Patroclus as appearing to him.

^u Vid. Odys. lib. xi. lin. 575, et seq. in which he speaks of the punishment of Tityus and Tantalus. In this, as well as many other things, he is imitated by Virgil. See Æneid. lib. vi. lin. 595, et seq.

^x See this argument managed with a great deal of learning and judgment by Mede, in his 'Apostasy of the Latter Times.' He proves, from many of their own writers, that the gods whom the heathens worshipped, were the souls of men deified or canonized after death, chap. iv. and Voss. de orig. &c. idol. lib. i. cap. xi, xii, xiii, who refers to Lact. lib. i. de fals. Relig. cap. v. whose words are these ; Quos imperiti, et insipientes, tanquam Deos et nuncupant, et adorant, nemo est tam inconsideratus, qui non intelligat fuisse mortales. Quomodo ergo, inquiet aliquis, Dii crediti sunt ? Nimirum quia reges maximi, ac potentissimi fuerunt, ob merita virtutum suarum, aut munerum, aut artium repertarum, cum chari fuissent iis, quibus imperitaverant, in memoriam sunt consecrati. Quod si quis dubitet, res eorum gestas, et facta, consideret : quæ universa tum poetæ, tum historici veteres, prodiderunt. Et August. de Civ. Dei, lib. viii. cap. v. Ipsi etiam majorum gentium Dii, quos Cicero in Tusculanis, tacitis nominibus videtur attingere, Jupiter, Juno, Saturnus, Vulcanus, Vesta, et, alii plurimi, quos Varro conatur ad mundi partes, sive elementa transferre, homines fuisse produntur. Et Cic. lib. i. de nat. Deor. Quid, qui aut fortes, aut claros, aut potentes viros tradunt post mortem ad Deos pervenisse ; eosque ipsos quos, nos colere, precari, venerarique soleamus ?

^y Acts xxiii. 8.

^z Some have wondered how the Sadducees could deny angels, and yet receive the five books of Moses, in which there is so frequent mention of the appearance of angels ; and it might as well be wondered how they could make any pretensions to religion while they denied the immortality of the soul. But as to both points, it may be said concerning them, that they were the most irreligious part of the Jewish nation. To make them consistent with themselves is past the skill of any who treat on this subject. Some suppose that they understand all those scriptures which speak concerning the appearance of angels, as importing nothing else but a bodily shape, appearing for a time, and conversing with those to whom it was sent, moved and actuated by the divine power, and then disappearing and vanishing into nothing.

what concerns the mere separate existence of the soul, or if they attempt to speak any thing concerning its happiness in a future state, they then discover that they know but little of the matter. Many of them, also, though they cannot deny the soul's immortality, seem to hesitate about it. We may therefore say with the apostle, that 'life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel:'^a that is, if we would be sure of the immortality of the soul, and know its state and enjoyments in another world, we must look farther than the light of nature for it; and in seeking for arguments in scripture, we shall find great satisfaction concerning this matter, which we cannot do from the writers before-mentioned. That some of the heathen were in doubt about this important truth, is very evident from their writings. Plato himself,^b notwithstanding the many things which he represents Socrates as saying concerning a state of immortality after death, yet when endeavouring to convince his friend Cebes about that matter, and apprehending that he had so far prevailed in the argument as to have forced his antagonist to allow that the soul survives the body, though he held that it transmigrated into other bodies, seems to concede this point to him, and adds, that it is uncertain whether the soul, having worn out many bodies, may not at last perish with one that it is united to;^c and he farther says to him, "I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, God only knows."^d As for Aristotle, though, in many places of his writings, he seems to maintain the immortality of the soul; yet in others, it appears that he is in doubt about it, and seems to assert that neither good nor evil happens to any man after his death.^e The Stoics, also, who did not altogether deny this doctrine; yet supposed that, in process of time, the soul would be dissolved.^f Even Cicero himself, notwithstanding all he says in apparent harmony with this doctrine, yet sometimes speaks with great hesitation about it.^g And notwithstanding what Seneca says concerning the immortality of the soul, as has been before observed, yet he speaks doubtfully of it.^h We must, therefore, have recourse to scripture, and to those consequences which are deduced from it, as well as those things which may be inferred from the nature of the soul, to prove that it is immortal.

1. For the proof of this doctrine, let it be considered that the soul is immaterial. This appears from its being capable of thought, whereby it is conversant about and takes in ideas of things divine and spiritual, which no creature below man can do. It has a power of inferring consequences from premises, and accordingly is the subject of moral government, capable of conversing with God here, and of expecting rewards or punishments from him hereafter. All this cannot be produced by matter and motion. As for matter, it is in itself altogether inactive; and when motion is impressed upon it, the only change made is in the situation and contexture of its parts,—a change which cannot give it life, sensation, or preception, much less

a 2 Tim. i. 10.

b In Phæd.

c His words are these: Κεῖς δὲ μοι ἰδοῦσι τούτο μὲν μοι ζυγῶν, πολυχρόνιον γὰρ εἶναι Ψυχὴν σώματος· ἀλλὰ τὸδε ἀδελόν παντί, μὴ πολλὰ δὴ σώματα καὶ πολλὰς κατατρεψάσα ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ τελευταῖον, σῶμα καταλίπουσα νῦν αὕτη ἀπολλύηται· καὶ ἡ αὕτη τούτου θάνατος. ψυχὴς οὐδέρος· εἴπερ σῶμα γ' αἱ ἀπολλύμενοι οὐδὲν παύεται.

d 'Ὅσοι οὖν δὲ ἡμῶν ἐρχονται ἐπὶ ἀμείνων πρᾶγμα, ἀδελόν παντί πλην ἡ τῷ θεῷ.

e Vid. Ejusd. moral. lib. iii. cap. ix.

f Vid. Diog. Laert. in Vit. Zen. τὴν ψυχὴν μετὰ θάνατον ἐπιμένειν. φθαρτὴν δὲ εἶναι; on which occasion Cicero says that, though they assert that they shall continue a great while in being, yet they deny that they shall exist for ever. Vid. Ejusd. in Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. Stoici usuram nobis largiuntur, tanquam cornicibus; diu mansuros animos aiunt; semper, negant.

g Et ibid. Ea quæ vis, ut potero, explicabo, nec tamen quasi Pythius Apollo certa ut sint, et fixa quæ dixerō, sed ut homunculus unus e multis, probabilis conjectura sequens; ultra enim quo progrediar quam ut verisimilia videam, non habeo; which Lactantius observes, speaking of him as in doubt about it. Vid. Lactant. de Vit. Beat. lib. vii. §. 8. And elsewhere he says, in lib. de Amicitia: Sin autem illa veriora, ut idem interitus sit animorum, et corporum, nec ullus sensus maneat: Ut nihil boni est in morte, sic certe nihil est mali. Et in lib. de Senect: Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro: Nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. Sin mortuus, ut quidam minuti philosophi censent, nihil sentiam; non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum philosophi minuti irrideant; Quod si non sumus immortales futuri, tamen extinguī hominem suo tempore, optabile est.

h Epist. 102. Credebam opinionibus magnorum virorum rem gratissimam promittentium, magis quam probantium.

a power of judging and willing, or of being conversant about things spiritual and immaterial. Nor was this power of thinking or reasoning derived from the body to which the soul is united. That which has not in itself these superior endowments, cannot communicate them to another. The body's union with the soul cannot impart them to it; for whatever sensation the body has, which is below the power of reasoning, is derived from the soul. This appears from its being wholly destitute of sensation, when the union between the soul and it is broken. Hence, as these superior powers or excellences of the soul are produced by another cause, we must conclude that they are immediately from God. This evidently appears from scripture. The body of Adam was first formed; and then it is said, 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,'ⁱ that is, he put into it that soul which was the spring and fountain of all living actions; and then it follows, 'Man became a living soul.' Moreover, it is considered as a peculiar display of the glory of God, that 'he formeth the spirit of man within him.'^k It follows, then, that the dissolution of the body makes no alteration in the powers and faculties of the soul; or that the soul, when dissolution takes place, is not rendered subject to death. For, as it did not derive these powers from the body, as was before observed; so it cannot be said to lose them in the ruin of the body. Thus our Saviour speaks of the soul as not being affected with those injuries which tend to the body's destruction, when he says, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'^l

2. We have in scripture a particular account of the soul when separated from the body, as disposed of in a different way from it. It does not go down to the earth, as the body does, whence it was, but 'returns to God who gave it.'^m Its return to God supposes that it is accountable to him for its actions performed in the body, or for the way and manner in which its faculties were exerted. Accordingly, when separate from it, it is represented as returning to God to give an account of its behaviour in the body, and to reap the fruits and effects of it. And as it is said to return to God; so believers breathe forth their souls, and resign them by faith, into the hand of God. Thus our Saviour said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;'ⁿ and Stephen said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'^o

3. The soul's immortality may be proved from the vast extent of its capacities, and the small improvement men make of them in this world, especially the greatest part of mankind. What a multitude are there who never had the faculties of the soul deduced into act, in whom the powers of reasoning were altogether useless, while in this world,—I mean those whose souls are separated from their bodies as soon as they are born! Others die in their childhood, before reason comes to maturity. And how great a part of the world live to old age, whose souls have not been employed in any thing great or excellent, in proportion to their capacities! Now, were these made in vain? Or did God design, when he brought them into the world, or continued them either a longer or a shorter time in it, that they should never be employed in any thing worthy of these noble faculties? We must conclude, therefore, that there is another state, in which the soul shall act more agreeably to those capacities with which it is endowed.

4. This may be farther proved, not only from the natural desires which there are in all men of immortality, but more especially from those desires which the saints have of enjoying some things in God, which cannot be attained in this life. The natural desire of immortality is what belongs to all. With what reluctance, arising from a natural aversion to a dissolution, do the soul and body part, unless there be a well-grounded hope of a life of blessedness to follow! Moreover, there is not only a desire but an expectation of the soul's living for ever, when separated from the body, in a state of happiness,—an expectation which believers are made partakers of as a peculiar blessing from God. We must conclude, therefore, that he who gave such desire and expectation of immortality will satisfy them; so that as men have a thirst after happiness, which is the effect of a supernatural power, they shall not be disappointed or destitute of it; which they would be if the soul does not survive the body.

i Gen. ii. 17.
m Eccl. xii. 7.

k Zech. xii. 1.
n Luke xxiii. 46.

l Matt. x. 28.
o Acts vii. 59.

5. The immortality of the soul may be proved from the justice of God, as the governor of the world. This divine perfection renders it necessary, that rewards and punishments should be distributed according to men's behaviour in this life. We formerly observed, from the consideration of the spirit's returning to him, that man is supposed to be accountable to God; and the same thing follows, from what was said under another Head, concerning the soul's being the subject of moral government. But this argument will be farther improved under a following Answer, when we consider our Saviour's coming to judge the world.^p All the use we shall at present make of it is, that the soul, being thus accountable to God, has reason to expect some peculiar marks of favour beyond what it receives in this world, or to fear, as the consequence of crimes committed, some punishment from the hand of the supreme Judge of all. Accordingly, it is said, 'God will render to every man according to his deeds ;'^q and 'Every one shall receive according to what he hath done in the body, whether it be good or bad.'^r Now, that which makes for our present argument is, that the best men in the world do not at present receive such peculiar marks of divine favour, as to their outward condition, as some of the vilest men often do. This the prophet Jeremiah takes notice of, when he says, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee ; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments : Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously ?'^s The psalmist, also, when observing the prosperity of the wicked, says, 'They are not in trouble like other men ; neither are they plagued like other men,'^t that is, not exposed to such rebukes of providence, as to outward things, as good men are. What some allege to solve this difficulty is, that virtue has its own reward ; and that therefore the good man cannot but be happy, whatever troubles he meets with in this life, since he has something within himself which makes him so. This consideration, however, cannot give the least satisfaction to those who are destitute of the inward comfort referred to, that the divine distributions are just and equal. Besides, the principal ingredient in that internal happiness which arises from the exercise of religion and virtue, consists in the divine approbation, and in the interest which those who possess it have in that love which shall discover itself more fully when the soul, being separate from the body, shall enjoy the happiness resulting from it in another world. The consideration in question, therefore, so far from militating against the doctrine we are maintaining, affords a considerable argument to support it. But, on the other hand, it may be objected that sin brings its own punishment along with it, in that uneasiness which the wicked find in their own breasts ; concerning whom it is said, 'They are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest ; whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'^u This consideration, however, so far from being an objection, proves the immortality of the soul. For the fear which the wicked experience, arises from a sense of guilt, whereby persons are liable to punishment in another world, who are not in the least concerned about the punishment of sin in this, and are ready to conclude themselves out of the reach of human judicature. What they are afraid of is God's righteous judgments in another world, which they cannot, by any means, free themselves from the dread of. We must conclude, therefore, that this is as natural to man, considered as sinful, as the hope of future blessedness is to one who is righteous ; and both these are the result of a divine impression stamped on the souls of men, and afford an evident proof of their immortality.

The objections against the doctrine of the soul's immortality, are generally such as involve the lowest and most abject thoughts of human nature, in those who may truly be said to despise their own souls. When they pretend, as was formerly observed, that they are immaterial, they set the soul on a level with the body ; for matter, how much soever it be refined, has, when resolved into the particles of which it consists, no excellency above other material beings. As to the objections which are brought against this doctrine from scripture, by which the frailty of the present life is set forth, they do not in the least tend to overthrow the immortality

p See Quest. lxxxviii, lxxxix.
s Jer. xii. 1.

q Rom. ii. 6.
t Psal. lxxiii. 5.

r 2 Cor. v. 10.
u Isa. lvii. 20.

of the soul. Thus, when it is said, 'That which befallerh the sons of men, befallerh beasts, even one thing befallerh them. As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again,'^x it is plain that Solomon speaks of the inferior part of man, in which he has no pre-eminence above the beasts, as his body is resolved into dust, as well as the bodies of the brute creatures. Besides, the following words sufficiently confute the objection, 'The spirit of a man goeth upward;' for here he asserts, not only the superior excellency, but the immortality, of the soul.—Again, it is said, 'The living know that they must die, but the dead know not any thing; neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.'^y Now, the objection, as founded on these words, is sufficiently answered by only reading the following words. Their memory is forgotten, and they are said to have no farther reward in this world, or, as it is expressed, 'they have no more any portion for ever, in any thing that is done under the sun;' but this does not in the least intimate that they have no portion in what respects the things of another world. Indeed, their labour being unrewarded here, affords us an incontestable argument, that they shall have it hereafter, when the soul leaves this world.—Further, there are other scriptures which seem to speak as if death put an end to all those actions of religion which were performed by good men in this life. Thus, 'When I go down to the pit, shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth?'^z 'The dead praise not the Lord; neither any that go down into silence.'^a 'The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.'^b But these and similar expressions mean only that the praises of God cannot be celebrated by those who are in the state of the dead in such a way as when they lived in this world; that they cannot praise him in the assemblies of his saints, from which they are separated, they being no longer considered as members of the militant church; and that they are not apprized of, or affected with, the things done in this lower world, in which respect they are said to know nothing. But this does not in the least militate against their praising God with the church triumphant, and having those privileges conferred upon them which are adapted to a state of immortality and eternal life.—Finally, others object that the immortality of the soul respects only the righteous; because the apostle says, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'^c But the sense which the objectors give of these words contradicts all those scriptures which speak of the punishment of sin in another world; for if none are said to 'abide for ever' but the righteous, or they who do the will of God, the wicked must necessarily go unpunished. Hence, we must understand the word 'abiding' in the same sense as the psalmist does, when he says, 'The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;'^d which does not signify their not existing in a future state, but their not being admitted into the congregation of the righteous, or made happy with them in that state.

The Immediate Happiness of the Righteous after Death.

We shall now consider the happiness which the members of the invisible church enjoy, called 'communion with Christ in glory,' as it includes perfect holiness. Thus we read of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.'^e This perfection consists in the rooting out of all those remains of corruption, and those habitual inclinations to sin, which they were never wholly freed from in this world. The most that can be said concerning a believer at present, is that he has a principle of spiritual life and grace, which inclines him to oppose, and stand his ground against, the assaults of sin which dwelleth in him, whereby it is mortified, but not wholly destroyed. The work of sanctification is daily growing up to perfection, though it does not fully attain it. But when the soul leaves this world, it arrives at perfection in a moment; so that the power which man had at first to yield sinless obe-

^x Eccl. iii. 19, 20.
^b Isa. xxxviii. 18.

^y Chap. ix. 5.
^c 1 John ii. 17.

^z Psal. xxx. 9.
^d Psal. i. 5.

^e Psal. cxv. 17.
^e Heb. xii. 23.

dience, and which was lost by the fall of our first parents, is regained with great advantage. For this perfection of holiness denotes not only a sinless state, but the soul's being confirmed in that state. Accordingly, the soul is said to be received into the highest heaven, the place into which no unclean thing can enter, where there is spotless purity, as well as everlasting happiness; and here the righteous are described as beholding the face of God in light and glory. These things need not be particularly insisted on in this place, since the same privileges are said, in a following Answer, to belong to believers after the day of judgment, both in their souls and bodies, when they shall be received into heaven, and be made perfectly holy and happy, and be blessed with the immediate vision of God.^f At present, therefore, we shall notice on this subject only the following particulars:—First, The soul is made partaker of this blessedness immediately on its separation from the body. Secondly, It is farther described as waiting for the full redemption of the body, which is still supposed to continue under the dominion of death, though united to Christ, and consequently under his special protection. On this account believers are said, when they die, to rest in their graves, as in their beds, till their bodies are again united to their souls at the last day.

I. We shall consider that the soul, as is observed in this Answer, is made partaker of this blessedness immediately after its separation from the body. This doctrine seems to militate against three absurd opinions which have been advanced relating to the state of separate souls. The first is that of the Papists, who maintain that the soul is not made perfect in holiness at death, but enters into a middle state, which they call purgatory, in which it is to endure exquisite torments, designed partly as a punishment inflicted for those sins committed in this life which have not been expiated by satisfaction made by them, and partly to free them from the sin which they brought with them into that state. Another opinion which seems to be opposed in this answer, is what was maintained by some of the ancient Fathers, namely, that the souls of believers do immediately enter, not into the highest heaven before they are reunited to their bodies, but into paradise, not to suffer, as the Papists pretend they do in purgatory, but to enjoy pleasures which are reserved for them in a place not much inferior to heaven. The third opinion which is subversive of the doctrine contained in Answer, is, that the soul, at its separation from the body, sleeps till the resurrection, and that, therefore, in the intermediate space of time in which it is separate, it is no more capable of happiness or misery than the body which lies in the grave. The absurdity of these opinions we shall take occasion farther to consider.

1. We notice first the opinion of the Papists concerning a middle state, into which they suppose souls enter at death, in order to their being cleansed from the remains of sin, and so made meet for heaven. This doctrine, how ludicrous and ungrounded soever it may appear to be, they are so fond of, that it will be as hard a matter to convince them of the absurdity of it, as it was of old to convince the worshippers of Diana at Ephesus of their stupid idolatry; and the reason is, that it tends to promote their secular interest. They first endeavoured to persuade the poor deluded people, that they must suffer very great torments after death, unless they be relieved by the prayers of their surviving friends; and then they endeavoured to induce survivors to show this favour to them, as well as to merit for themselves some abatement of these torments, or a speedy release from them. They tell them that it is their duty and interest to leave their estates, by their last will and testament, to pious uses, such as building of churches, endowing of monasteries, &c.; and by their success in such appeals, they have got a great part of the estates of the people into their own hands. To carry on this cheat, they give particular instances, in some of their writings, of souls being released from this dreadful place by their prayers. The account they give of this middle state between heaven and hell, is not only that souls are not admitted into the immediate presence of God, but that they are exposed to grievous torments by fire, little short of those which are endured in hell, and that if they are not helped by the prayers of the church, they are in danger of being sent directly to hell whence there is no release. They add

^f See Quest. xc.

that the punishment in this middle state, is longer or shorter, in proportion to the crimes committed in this world, for which satisfaction has not been made by penances endured, or money given to compensate for them. Some, indeed, are allowed by them to pass immediately into heaven, without being detained here, namely, those who have performed works of supererogation, or who, by entering into a vow of poverty, have parted with their estates, while living in the world, for the use of the church; for in this case no end could be answered, by telling them this fable of purgatory. Others are told that they may escape it by entering into a vow of chastity and canonical obedience. This belongs more especially to the priests, when entering into holy orders; who thus take care to make provision for themselves, that so the deluded people may have a greater regard to their prayers, since they will find none in purgatory to perform that service for them. This is so vile and absurd an opinion, that it cannot but expose the church of Rome to the scorn and contempt of all who are not given up to strong delusions.

But though it sufficiently appears, that secular interest is the main foundation of the doctrine; yet there are some arguments, which they take from scripture to support it. These alone require our notice. One scripture to which they refer is in Isa. iv. 4, where the prophet speaks concerning the Lord's 'purging the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.' The event here spoken of they suppose should have its accomplishment when the soul left the body, and should be detained in purgatory. This interpretation, however, is very remote from the design of the Holy Ghost in the passage. The words contain only a metaphorical description of some judgments which God would inflict on the people of Jerusalem in this life, as a punishment for their iniquities, and as a means to reclaim them from them. In the same way, we often read in the prophets of God's 'refining' his people 'in the furnace of affliction.'^g And it is said, 'The Lord's fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem;'^h denoting the sore judgments they should undergo in this world, as a punishment for their idolatry.

Another scripture, which is miserably perverted, to support the doctrine of purgatory, is Zech. ix. 11, 'By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.' This passage, they suppose, is to be understood of some state after this life; because the place of which it speaks is called 'the pit,' and is described as a place of misery, inasmuch as there is no water, that is, no refreshing comforts. They add, that the prophet does not speak of hell; because some persons are described as 'sent forth,' or released from it; so that it must needs be understood of this middle state between heaven and hell. But this is far from being the sense of the text. It contains a prediction of the Jews being delivered from the Babylonish captivity; and Babylon, in a metaphorical way of speaking, is called 'the pit wherein is no water,' to denote the great distress that the people were to be brought under there. Thus the prophet Isaiah, speaking of their deliverance from the captivity, says, 'The captive exile hasteneth, that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit.'ⁱ Or the passage denotes some future deliverance, which the church was to expect after great calamities undergone by them. This is said to be 'by the blood of the covenant,' because all the happiness which the church shall enjoy in this world, as well as in the other, is founded in the blood of Christ, pursuant to the covenant of grace. Even if the text must necessarily be understood of a deliverance from evil after death, it may be considered as a prediction of our being delivered from eternal destruction, by the blood of Jesus.

Another scripture which they bring to support the fabulous doctrine of purgatory, is 1 Cor. iii. 13—15, 'Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.' The reason why this scripture is forced into the cause which they maintain is, that it speaks of persons being

‘saved so as by fire.’ This they suppose to refer to what should follow after the particular judgment of every one at death, when a scrutiny shall be made concerning their works, or their behaviour in this world, and when they who are found faulty may be saved after they have endured those sufferings which are there allotted for them. But there is nothing in the text which gives the least countenance to this notion. The apostle seems to be speaking concerning those ministers who preach false doctrines, that is, propagate errors not directly subversive of the fundamental articles of faith, but such as tend to embarrass the consciences of men, and, in many respects, lead them out of the way; or of others, who have been perverted by them, and have embraced pernicious errors, which, in their consequences, are subversive of the faith, but yet do not hold those consequences. These may be saved; but their salvation shall be attended with some difficulty, arising from the mistaken notions which they have imbibed. Some compare their case to that of a person whose house is in flames, and who saves his life with difficulty, being scorched by the fire. God will, in his own time, take some method to discover what notions we have received in religion; and he is said to do this by fire. Whether the passage, as a learned writer observes, is to be understood of the clear gospel-dispensation,^k or whether it respects some trying dispensation of providence, accompanied with a greater measure of the effusion of the Spirit, which shall lead men into the knowledge of their mistakes, and set them in the right way, I will not determine. But whether the one or the other of these senses of the text seems most agreeable to the mind of the apostle, it is sufficiently evident that no countenance is given, either in this or any other scripture, to the absurd doctrine of the Papists.

Another scripture which they bring for the proof of this doctrine is 1 Pet. iii. 19, in which it is said that our Saviour ‘went and preached unto the spirits in prison.’ The sense they give of this text, compared with the foregoing verse, is that our Saviour, after his death, visited those repositories where the Old Testament saints were lodged, and preached the gospel to them; that they embraced it, and in consequence were admitted into heaven; and that, in like manner, he went down to the subterraneous prison of purgatory, and preached to its inmates also. But whether his preaching to them was attended with the same success or not, they pretend not to determine. Only the supposed fact of his preaching, they allege as a proof that there is such a place. To give countenance to their interpretation, they say that by ‘the prison’ here spoken of, the prison of hell cannot be intended; inasmuch as there is no hope of salvation there, and consequently no preaching of the gospel. Nor, they add, can it be meant of his preaching to any in this world; for they suppose that he went after he left the world and ‘preached to spirits,’ that is, to persons whose souls were separate from their bodies. Hence, he went, as they argue, and preached to those that are in purgatory. But in giving this sense of the text, they are obliged to take no notice of what follows, which, if duly considered, would plainly overthrow it. The meaning of the passage is, that our Saviour preached by his Spirit to the old world in the ministry of Noah, while the latter was preparing the ark; and that they, being disobedient, were not only destroyed by the flood, but shut up in the prison of hell. On this account, it is said that he preached to those that are now in prison. This scripture, therefore, makes nothing for the doctrine which we are opposing. [See Note P, page 245.] Nor does any other which is or can be brought; so that all the arguments pretended to be taken from scripture are a manifest perversion of it.

There is, however, one method of reasoning made use of by them which I cannot pass over, inasmuch as they apprehend that it contains a dilemma which is unanswerable; namely, that there is some place in which persons are perfectly freed from sin, which must be either this world, or heaven, or some middle state between them. It is allowed by all, they say, that there is no perfect freedom from sin in this world; and to suppose that persons are perfectly freed from sin after they come to heaven, is to conclude that heaven is a state of probation, in which the gospel must be preached, and persons who attend upon it be inclined to embrace it. This,

^k See Dr. Edward’s Exercit., Part II., on 1 Cor. iii. 15, who, to give countenance to this opinion, produces two scriptures, namely, Mark xiv. 54, and Luke xxii. 56, where the word *φωσ* is put for fire; whence he supposes that *φωσ* and *πυρ* are used promiscuously.

they add, is not agreeable to a state of perfection; and is also contrary to scripture, which speaks of no unclean thing entering heaven. It hence follows, they say, that the state in which men are fitted for heaven, must be that which they plead for, namely, a middle state, in which they are first purged, and then received into heaven — Now, it is true that believers are not perfectly freed from sin in this world, nor do they enter into heaven with either the guilt or the pollution of their sins upon them; but they are made perfect in an instant, in passing out of this world into heaven. The same stroke which separates the soul from the body, takes away the remains of corruption, and fits the soul for the heavenly state. It passes out of this world perfect, though it was imperfect while in it; in like manner as the body, in being raised out of the grave, is rendered incorruptible. We have hence no occasion to invent a middle state, into which the saints are brought; and it follows, as it is expressed in this Answer, that the souls of believers, immediately after death, are made perfect in holiness. [See Note Q, page 246.]

2. There is another opinion opposed to the doctrine we are maintaining, embraced by some of the Jews, and several of the Fathers, in which they are followed by some modern writers; namely, that the souls of believers at death enter into paradise, where they continue till they are reunited to their bodies, and, after the day of judgment, are received into the highest heaven. Accordingly, they understand our Saviour's words to the penitent thief on the cross, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise,' in a literal sense, as mentioning paradise in contradistinction to heaven. They assert, also, that the soul of our Saviour, when separated from his body, went immediately into paradise, and did not go into heaven until after his resurrection. They suppose paradise to import the same thing as 'Abraham's bosom' does in the parable. Indeed, the Greek word¹ which we translate 'bosom,' in the metaphorical sense of it, signifies a port or haven, which is, as it were, a bosom for shipping.

This paradise is described as very distinct from the popish purgatory; for it is not a place of suffering, but of delight and pleasure. Tertullian, who adopted this notion,^m describes it as a place of divine pleasure, designed for the reception of the spirits of holy men, being separate either from this world, or other places near it, by an enclosure of fire, designed to keep the wicked out. It is what they suppose the apostle Paul speaks of when he says that he was 'caught up into paradise;'ⁿ and they conclude that the vision or rapture which he mentions, includes what he experienced at two several times, because he speaks,^o not of a single vision, but of 'visions and revelations.' Accordingly, they suppose that he had first of all a vision of the glory of heaven, and that then he had another of paradise. Thus a late writer understands the text.^p I cannot think, however, that the interpretation is well-founded. The apostle's words are, as it were, a preface to introduce the account which he gives of himself. He says, 'I will come to visions and revelations;' that is, I will now tell you how God sometimes favours his people with extraordinary visions and revelations. Then he proceeds to give an instance in himself, that he was 'caught up into the third heaven,' or into paradise. For I cannot suppose that he speaks of two visions, or distinguishes paradise from heaven. I am hence obliged not to pay that deference to the sentiments of the Fathers mentioned by Whitby, which he does; but must conclude the notion to be altogether ungrounded, though it is supported by the credit of Irenæus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Methodius, as well as of several Jewish writers, such as Philo and some others.^q

3. We shall now consider another doctrine, maintained by some, which is inconsistent with what is said in this Answer concerning the souls of believers being made perfect in holiness, and entering immediately into heaven when separated from their bodies. That opinion is, that at death the soul, as well as the body, sleeps till the resurrection, when the one shall be raised, and the other awakened out of its sleep. Those who maintain this opinion suppose, not that the soul ceases to exist, but that

1 Κελευθός. Sinus, a bosom, coast, or haven.

m Vid. Tertull. Apologet. cap. xlvii. Et si paradisum nominemus, locum divinæ amœnitatis recipiendis sanctorum spiritibus destinatum, materia quadam igneæ illius Zonæ segregatum.

n 2 Cor. xii. 4.

o Verse 1.

p See Whitby in loc.

q See also his notes on Luke xxiii. 43.

it enters into and continues in a state of inactivity, without any power to exercise the faculty of thinking, and, in consequence, whilst remaining in this state, must be incapable of either happiness or misery. They assert, not that there shall be no rewards and punishments in a future state, but that there will be a deferring of these till the last day.

This doctrine was generally maintained by the Socinians, as may be seen in several of their writings referred to by a learned author who opposes them.^r The arguments by which it is usually supported, are taken partly from the possibility of the soul's being destitute of thought, and partly from those scriptures which compare death to a sleep; by which they understand a cessation of action, not only in the body, but likewise in the soul. In defence of the notion that it is possible for the soul to be without the exercise of thought, they argue that the soul of a new-born infant, or at least of an infant before it is born, has no ideas; and that though there is a power of reasoning which is essential to the soul, yet this is not deduced into act, so as to produce thought or actual reasoning, whence moral good or evil would proceed, and a sense of happiness or misery arise from it. This notion is carried somewhat farther by a late celebrated writer.^s He himself, indeed, takes no notice of the tendency of his assertion to support the opinion concerning the soul's sleeping at death; yet others make a handle of it, to defend that opinion with a greater show of reason than what was formerly discovered in maintaining this argument. He asserts that the souls of those who are adult do not always think; that particularly when a person is in a sound sleep he has no thought, how much soever there may be the exercise of thought, though confused and irregular, in those who, between sleeping and waking, not only dream a thousand things which they never thought of before, but also remember their dreams when they awake. That a person in a sound sleep has no dreams, and consequently is destitute of thought, he attempts to prove. He remarks that when any one is suddenly waked out of a sound sleep, he can give no account of what he had been thinking of; and he supposes it impossible for a person who was thinking, to forget the next moment what his thoughts were conversant about. This is the principal argument by which he supports this notion; and he has so far the advantage, that it is impossible for us to prove the contrary from any thing which we know or experience concerning ourselves. The argument, however, will not appear very convincing, when we consider that there are innumerable thoughts which we have when awake, which we can hardly give an account of the next minute. Besides, if the thoughts are very active in those who dream,—who are as much asleep as others who do not dream, though their sleep may not be so refreshing, I cannot see how the consequence can be inferred, that sleep is inconsistent with thought. Moreover, a person who is delirious or distracted, undoubtedly thinks, though his thoughts are disordered; but when the delirium or distraction is over, he can no more remember what he thought of than a person who is waked out of the soundest sleep. The argument in question, therefore, tends rather to amuse, or embarrass the cause they maintain, than to give sufficient conviction. Now, from this method of reasoning it is inferred that, when the soul is separate from the body, it is altogether destitute of the exercise of thought, which is what they mean by the soul's sleeping. To give farther countenance to this matter, they produce several scriptures in which death is compared to a sleep. Thus, when God speaks of the death of Moses, he says, 'Behold, thou

^r Vid. Hoornbeek Socin. Confut. tom. iii. lib. v. cap. i. who quotes some passages out of several Socinian writers. Of these I shall mention what is said by only two of them, with whom several others of their brethren agree. Vid. Socin. in Epist. v. ad Volkel. *Tantum id mihi videtur statui posse, post hanc vitam, animam, sive animum hominis non ita per se subsistere ut præmia ulla pænæve sentiat; vel etiam ista sentiendi sit capax, quæ mea firma opinio facile potest colligi ex multis quæ à me dicuntur, etc.* Et Smalc. in Exam. Error. page 33. *Animam vel spiritum hominis post mortem aliquid sentire, vel aliqua re perfrui, nec ratio permittit nec scriptura testatur: Ut enim corpus sine anima, sic etiam anima sine corpore, nullus operationes exercere potest; et perinde sit ac si anima illorum nulla esset, etiamsi suo modo sit, quia scilicet nullius rei sensum habeat, aut per se voluptate aliqua frui possit.* And elsewhere the same author is so hardy as to term the contrary doctrine no other than a fable, in lib. de Dei Filio, cap. vi. page 43. *Quod vero de vitæ animarum disserit, hoc instar fabulæ est, etc.* Spiritum hominis ad Deum redire testatur sacra scriptura, at eum vivere vita, ut ait Smiglecus, spirituum, et vel aliquid intelligere, vel voluptate frui, hoc extra, et contra scripturam dicitur.

^s See Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding, lib. ii. cap. i. § ix. to the sixteenth.

shalt sleep with thy fathers.^t Joo also speaks of sleeping in the dust;^u and concerning the resurrection after death, he says, 'Man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.'^v David prays, 'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.'^y And our Saviour, speaking concerning Lazarus, when dead, says, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep;^z which he afterwards explains, when he says, 'Lazarus is dead.'^a There are several other scriptures to the same purpose, which they bring to prove that the soul sleeps in death, taking the word 'sleep' in its literal sense.

Now, in reply to their arguments, we reply that as to the possibility of the soul being rendered incapable of thinking, when separate from the body; it is no just way of reasoning to infer from the possibility of a thing, the actual being of it. Hence, if it could be proved to a demonstration, as the author above-mentioned supposes he has done, though I think without sufficient ground, that sleep deprives a person of thought; it will not follow that the soul, when separate from the body, ceases to think. When the powers and faculties of the soul are deduced into act, experience tells us that they are greatly improved and strengthened. The exercise of them, therefore, cannot be so easily impeded as is pretended; especially when we consider that the soul does not derive its activity from the body, which contributes very little to its ideas of things immaterial, which are not the objects of sense. And how much soever bodily diseases may weaken or interrupt the soul in its actings, we do not find that they so far destroy those powers, but that, when the distemper ceases, the former actings return, like the spring of a watch which may be stopped by something that hinders the motion of the wheels, and which, when this is removed, continues to give motion to them as it had done before. The body, at most, can be considered but as a clog and impediment to the activity of the soul; and we may hence infer that, in a state of separation, the soul is so far from being impeded in its actings, that it becomes more active than before.—But what I would principally insist on as sufficient to overthrow the doctrine we are opposing, is the account which we have in many scriptures, and several just consequences which may be deduced from them, by which it will appear that nothing which has been said concerning the possibility of the soul's being inactive, when separate from the body, can enervate the force of the argument to support the contrary doctrine. It is true, the scripture often represents death as a sleep, as in the places formerly mentioned. Death is also sometimes described as a state of rest, which is of the same import with sleep; but this is explained as a state of peace, holiness, and happiness, and not a cessation from action. Thus it is said, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.'^b This is plainly meant of the death of the righteous, as appears from the preceding verse, where it is said, 'The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.' Now, these are said to 'enter into peace;' which supposes that they are capable of the enjoyment of those blessings which the soul shall then be possessed of. They are also said to 'walk in their uprightness;' which signifies their being active in what respects the glory of God, which is very inconsistent with the soul's sleeping, when separate from the body. Rest and sleep are metaphorical expressions, when applied to this doctrine. Now nothing is more common than for such figurative ways of speaking to be used in the sacred writings; so that it is very absurd for us to understand the words in a literal sense in the instance before us.

We will now proceed to consider the proofs we have from scripture of the soul's being in a state of activity when separate from the body. The first scripture which may be brought to prove this, is 2 Cor. xii. 2—4, where the apostle says concerning himself that he was 'caught up into the third heaven,' and knew not whether he was, at the same time, 'in, or out of the body.' If he was in the body, his senses were locked up, and he must be supposed to have been in a trance; which militates against the supposition that the soul's power of acting may be impeded either by sleep or some bodily disease, in which there is not the exercise of the

^t Deut. xxxi. 16.
^z John xi. 11.

^u Job vii. 21.
^a Verse 14.

^x Chap. xiv. 12.
^b Isa. lvii. 2.

^y Psal. xiii. 3.

senses. Or if, on the other hand, he was 'out of the body,' his 'hearing unspeakable words' plainly proves our argument,—that the soul is capable of action, and consequently of enjoying the heavenly glory, when separate from the body. Moreover, this is evident from our Saviour's words to the penitent thief on the cross, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'^c To be 'in paradise' is certainly to be in heaven in a state of complete blessedness, where the soul delights itself in the enjoyment of God, which is altogether inconsistent with a state of insensibility. Were it otherwise, it ought rather to have been said, thou shalt be with me in paradise after the resurrection of the body, than to-day. The method which some take to evade the force of this argument, who say that 'to-day' refers, not to the time of his being admitted into heaven, but to the time when Christ spake these words, is so low and trifling, that it does not deserve an answer. —There is another scripture which fully proves our doctrine, namely, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.'^d Here the apostle takes it for granted that, as soon as he departed out of this world, he should be with Christ. This denotes that he should be in his immediate presence, beholding his glory; and is inconsistent with the supposition that the soul sleeps at death. Besides, he says, 'This is far better;' and he could not have said so, if the notion we are opposing were true. For it is much better for a saint to be serving Christ's interest in this world, and made so eminently useful in promoting his glory as the apostle was, than to be in a state of inactivity, in which the soul is not capable of doing any thing for him, or of enjoying any thing from him. Indeed, there is no comparison between the two states; so that when he said he was 'in a strait' which he should choose, the matter, had it been referred to him, might easily have been determined in favour of his continuing in this world; for here he was useful,—while, in a state of inactivity, he would not only be useless, but incapable of enjoying those privileges which he was made partaker of here.—Further, we have another argument taken from 2 Cor. v. 8, 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Here presence with the Lord is inferred from absence from the body, without any intimation of waiting till the soul is united again to the body, before being admitted into Christ's presence.—Again, our doctrine appears from the words of Solomon, in Eccles. iv. 2, 'I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.' By these words we are to understand that the state of believers, when they die, is much more happy than it can be in this life. Now this supposes that they are capable of happiness, and consequently that the soul, when separated from the body, is not in a state of insensibility, which is altogether inconsistent with happiness. We may add what our Saviour says in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: 'The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.'^e In this parable we have an account of the different state of the souls of the righteous and of the wicked at death, and not merely what shall follow after the resurrection of the body. For when the rich man is represented as being in torments, he says, in a following part of the parable, 'I have five brethren;' and he would have had 'Lazarus sent to testify to them, lest they should also come into that place of torment;' and he is told, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.'^f Now all this plainly intimates that the parable refers to the state of separate souls before the resurrection, whilst others enjoyed the means of grace; and consequently it proves that the soul, when separate from the body, is capable of happiness or misery, and, what is more, is fixed in the one or the other of them.

An objection is founded on those scriptures which speak of the happiness or misery of men, as deferred to the end of the world. It is intimated in the parable of the tares, that 'the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just;'^g and the former are said to be 'cast into a furnace of fire;'^h and the latter, namely, the righteous, are said to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'ⁱ

c Luke xxiii. 43.

d Phil. i. 23.

e Luke xvi. 22, 23.

f Verses 28, 29.

g Matt. xiii. 9.

h Verses 49, 50.

i Verse 43.

Moreover, our Saviour speaks of his people as 'blessed, and recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'^k The apostle Paul also expresses his hope of 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give him at that day,'¹ that is, the day of his coming to judgment. Several other scriptures likewise speak of what is consequent to the resurrection.—Now, we observe, in reply, that these scriptures respect, not the beginning, but the consummation of the happiness of the saints, or their complete blessedness in soul and body. This, however, is not inconsistent with the happiness which separate souls enjoy before the resurrection. Nor is the misery which is consequent upon the resurrection inconsistent with that which sinners endure before it, when their souls are separate from their bodies. Thus concerning the happiness of the souls of believers at death.

II. We are now led to consider what is farther observed in this Answer, concerning the soul's waiting for the full redemption of the body. The justified soul, though it continues under the dominion of death, is notwithstanding united to Christ; and accordingly believers are said to rest in their graves as in their beds, till the resurrection.

1. The souls of believers are described as 'waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.' This is the same expression which the apostle uses, Rom. viii. 23; where 'redemption' denotes a full discharge from the state of confinement in the grave, in which the body was rendered incapable of answering the end for which it was redeemed by Christ, while the soul was, at the same time, destitute of that happiness which its reunion therewith shall convey to it. The soul's enjoyments were all spiritual, and, in their kind, perfect; yet it was naked, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'unclothed;' it wanted that which was designed to be a constituent part of the human nature, and without which it was indisposed for those actions and enjoyments which arise from its union with the body. This reunion with the body it is said to wait for, as a desire of reunion therewith is natural to it; yet it waits without impatience, or any diminution of its intellectual happiness.

2. As to the bodies of believers, they are said to continue united to Christ. This is the result of their being redeemed by him, and of his condescending to dwell in them by his Spirit. His love extends itself to their lower part, as well as to their souls. 'Nothing,' as the apostle says, 'shall separate' a believer 'from his love;' no 'not death itself.'^m On this account they are said to 'sleep in Jesus,'ⁿ or to 'die in the Lord.'^o They are indeed buried in the grave, and seem to lie neglected like common dust; yet it is said, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'^p Christ reckons every particle of their dust among 'his jewels';^q and is no more ashamed to own them as his peculiar care, than he was when they were in their most flourishing state in this world. For this reason they are also said to 'rest in their graves as in their beds.' This is a scripture-expression, as the psalmist says, 'My flesh shall rest in hope';^r and the prophet Isaiah, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds.'^s The body, indeed, remains under the external part of the curse due to man for sin; yet, as will be abundantly demonstrated when death shall be completely swallowed up in victory, it is freed from that which is the most bitter ingredient of it. In this the bodies of believers have the advantage of all others. The frame of nature indeed is dissolved; there is no visible mark of distinction from the wicked put upon them in the grave; yet there is a vast difference in God's account. This a writer elegantly compares to the removing of the tabernacle in the wilderness. When the Israelites changed their stations, all the parts of the tabernacle were carefully taken down and delivered to the Levites' charge, in order to its being raised again with honour. On the contrary, the house incurably infected with the leprosy, was plucked down with violence, and thrown into an unclean place with execration. The bodies of the saints are committed to the bosom of the earth, as the repository Christ has appointed for them; whence he will call them forth at last, when their souls shall be again united to them in the glorious morning of the resurrection.

^k Luke xiv. 14.

ⁿ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

^q Mal. iii. 17.

^l 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^o Rev. xiv. 13.

^r Psal. xvi. 9.

^m Rom. viii. 38, 39.

^p Psal. cxvi. 15.

^s Isa. lvii. 2.

The Misery of the Wicked at Death.

We shall now consider the misery which the souls of the wicked endure at death. This is stated in the latter part of this Answer. We have here a different scene opened, the final state of the wicked described in words adapted to strike dread and terror into those who have at present no sense of their future misery. Their souls are considered as cast into or shut up in hell, their bodies imprisoned in the grave, and both the objects of divine wrath. We shall have occasion, under a following Answer,^t farther to speak concerning the punishment which shall be inflicted on sinners, whose torments shall be inexpressible, both in body and in soul, after the day of judgment. At present, therefore, we shall consider only the misery which the souls of the wicked shall undergo before they are united to their bodies. The soul which carries out of the world with it the power of reflecting on itself as happy or miserable, immediately sees itself separate from the comfortable presence of God, the fountain of blessedness. What tends to enhance its misery beyond what it is capable of in this life, will be the enlargement of its faculties. Its apprehension shall be more clear, and its sensation of the wrath of God more pungent, when it is not oppressed with the drowsiness and stupidity which characterized it in the present life. Nor will it be possible for it to delude itself with those vain hopes which it once conceived of escaping that misery which it is now plunged into; when all the waves and billows of the Almighty shall overwhelm and swallow it up. The soul is, in a peculiar manner, the subject of misery, as it is made uneasy by its own thoughts; which are compared to the worm that dieth not. While the sinner looks backwards, and calls to mind the actions of his past life, and all his sins are charged upon him, his soul is filled with such a sense of guilt and confusion as is inexpressibly tormenting; and when he looks forwards, there is nothing but what administers despair, which increases his misery to the highest degree. These torments the soul endures before it is reunited to the body, and thereby rendered receptive of others, which we generally call the punishment of sense.

The place of punishment is the same that is allotted for soul and body, namely, hell. This is called outer darkness; which is an expression used to signify the greatest degree of misery. As for their bodies, they dread the thoughts of being united to them again; inasmuch as the reunion will bring with it new accessions of torment. They are considered as liable to a double dishonour; not only that which arises from their being in a state of corruption in common with all mankind, but in their being detained in the grave, as prisoners to the justice of God, whence they shall not be released as persons acquitted or discharged, but remanded from that prison to another, from which there is no deliverance. But more of this under a following Answer.

t Quest. lxxxix.

[NOTE P. *Christ's Preaching to the Spirits in Prison.*—Our Lord went at death, not to do any work in a middle state, but to be with his Father and reveal himself in paradise to the saved. On the eve of his death, he said to his disciples, 'I go to my Father;' on the cross, he said to the penitent thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;' and at the moment of expiring, he said to the Father, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit.' Nor did he go in person to 'the spirits in prison' of whom the apostle Peter speaks; but he went and preached to them by the Spirit,—the Holy Ghost, who spoke in all the prophets and holy men of old, and testified of Christ. Just as he went to 'the spirits' in question, so he went to the Ephesians who, in the days of the apostolic ministry, were converted to the Christian faith. 'Having slain the enmity by the cross,' says the apostle Paul, addressing the Ephesian believers, 'he came and preached peace to you who were afar off,' Eph. ii. 17. As, by the ministry of Paul, but not in his own person, he 'came and preached' to the Ephesians; so, by the ministry of Noah, but not in his own person, 'he went and preached to the spirits in prison.' Noah was 'a preacher of righteousness,' (2 Pet. ii. 5.) or of the way of mercy; and he just as really as Paul 'prayed men in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech them by him, to be reconciled to God.' The time, therefore, at which Christ preached to 'the spirits in prison,' was 'the days of Noah,' when the ark was a-preparing. 'The spirits,' too, were not only disobedient but objects of long-suffering: they were persons who were disobedient when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah: they were not condemned men enduring the miseries of final wrath, but disobedient hearers of divine warnings which told them of wrath to come, and favoured objects of the divine long-suffering which 'waited' for their repentance. Nor is it strange that they are called 'spirits,'—'souls' or 'spirits' being a current designation of living

men, in even the historical parts of scripture.¹ See Gen. xii. 5; xlv. 15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27; Exod. i. 5; xii. 4; Josh. x. 28, 30, 32; xi. 11, and many other texts. The 'prison,' then, in which they were confined, was simply the doomed world, converted into a vast dungeon from which the impenitent could not escape, and walled round by denunciations of the divine anger which should certainly be executed. They were persons 'in keeping,' or 'under guard,' *ἐν φυλακῇ*. Accordingly, they were not, as the Romish gloss on the passage represents, delivered from 'the guard' which was over them, or 'the prison' in which they were shut up; for only 'a few, that is, eight souls,' Noah and his family, who held a common position with them, 'were saved.' Even these, also, were saved, not by fire, but 'by water,'—not by the action of purgatorial flame, but by being borne aloft in the ark on the surface of the flood,—'the like figure whereunto,' adds the apostle, 'even baptism doth also now save us—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God—by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' To crown all, the persons described were guilty of what Romanists call 'mortal sin,' or rather of all mortal sins combined; and, therefore, could not, according to the church of Rome's own doctrine, have been allowed admission to her supposed purgatory. Scarcely, then, can there be a more reckless perversion of the sense of a passage, than that which Romanists practise on this text in Peter.—ED.]

[NOTE Q. *Arguments against Purgatory*.—As Dr. Ridgeley has merely repelled the arguments advanced by Romanists in favour of their doctrine of purgatory, an outline of arguments on the opposite side, affording direct evidence that the doctrine is unscriptural, may not be unsuitable.

The doctrine of purgatory, then, is inconsistent with the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. Our Lord is able to 'save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' 'There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Men, if justified by his blood at all, are 'justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' They have a remedy applied to them which is divinely efficacious to remove all their maladies; they have had a price paid for them which is divinely precious to 'redeem them from all evil;' and they cannot need, and consequently will not receive, such poor though painful supplementary aid as the action, for a season, of purgatorial fire.

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent also with the nature and the means of moral purification. Romanists are not agreed as to what their pretended purgatorial fire is; though the majority believe it to be literal fire, while the remainder suppose it to be something capable of inflicting agonizing pain. But who can conceive of mind being operated on, as if in a chemical way, by physical agency—of an intellect being burned, a memory excoiated, a soul fused or refined by literal flame? Or, if the fire be only figurative, who, with the Bible before him, can imagine the soul's moral purification to be effected by its subjection to pain and anguish? *Moral means* are those alone which, by divine appointment, and in suitableness to man's intellectual nature, are employed to remove his pollution and make him holy. He is 'sanctified by the truth.' His 'heart is purified by faith.' A believer is 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' His 'soul is purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' He is 'sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word, Christ having given himself for him, that he might present him to himself not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that he should be holy and without blemish.' While, therefore, the sacrifice of Christ is all-sufficient to take away all guilt, the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, is all-sufficient to remove all corruption; so that, on the one hand, purgatorial fire is not needed and cannot exist to make atonement, and, on the other hand, is not needed and cannot exist to effect moral purification.

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent likewise with the condition and character of believers in Christ. Persons interested in Christ, as Romanists represent the candidates for their supposed purgatory to be, are 'one spirit with the Lord.' Their Redeemer and public Head says to them, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' They are 'dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God.' They never come into condemnation. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them.' They are beyond the reach of what is penal. 'Having been justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ their Lord, by whom also they have access into this grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.' They are partakers of life—eternal life—life together with Christ. They have received a right, *ἐξουσία*, to become the sons of God, 'the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' 'According to God's abundant mercy, they have been begotten again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.' How utterly irreconcilable with these views of the condition and hopes and relationships of Christians, and with other views equally glorious in the divine word, is the notion of their liability to be subjected to the penal and purgatorial fires of the Romish middle state! Look especially at their union with Christ,—their being one with him, married to him, quickened and raised with him; (Rom. vi. 3, 4, 6; 1 Cor. vi. 17; Eph. ii. 5, 6; Rom. v. 19; Matt. xxv. 40, 45; Isa. lxiii. 9; John xvii. 21, 22;) and at their present enjoyment of their salvation,—their *being* saved, and saved now;—(Luke vii. 50; xviii. 42; 1 Cor. i. 18; Tit. iii. 5; Luke xix. 9; Isa. xii. 2; Heb. v. 9; Isa. xlv. 17;) and can their condition and the doctrine of purgatory be for one moment viewed as compatible?

Again, the doctrine of purgatory, or of a middle or third state, is inconsistent with the uniform distribution of all moral matters into the two classes of good and evil. There are two ways in

which men walk,—the way that leads to life, and the way that leads to destruction; two gates through which they all pass,—the strait gate which many seek to enter but are not able, and the broad gate, through which the multitude press; two kingdoms maintained in the world,—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, or the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness; two masters whom men serve, or to whom they yield subjection and obedience,—God and mammon, the living God and the demon of idolatry, holiness and sin; two families into which the human race are divided,—the children of God and the children of the wicked one; two classes into which the divine law distributes all who are under it,—those who are alive to God, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins, the saved and the lost, the justified and the condemned, the righteous and the wicked. Now, correspondingly to this uniform twofold classification, there are, and can be, only two ends,—‘life and death,’ salvation and destruction, heaven and hell.

Further, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with the purposes and designs of Deity in calling men to the knowledge of the gospel. He ‘chose them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.’ They, hence, ‘have obtained’—in the present life, or simply as believers on the Son of God—‘an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that they should be to the praise of his glory.’ They were predestinated—not to come into a state of imperfect salvation which should require to be completed by some new and lengthened process in another world—but to be ‘conformed to the image of God’s Son.’ ‘Moreover,’ adds the apostle, ‘whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.’ They are ‘saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves—it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.’ All the designs of the divine purposes concerning them, therefore, secure their being renovated, justified, sanctified, made heirs of glory, and set up to the praise of the divine grace, in the present world. ‘My sheep hear my voice,’ said Christ, ‘and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’ How, then, can any of them—alive to God, possessors of eternal life, held fast in the Redeemer’s hand, predestinated, redeemed, and called to the heirship of heaven and practical conformity to the image of God’s Son—be in a condition of fitness or liability to pass at death into a middle or purgatorial state?

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent also with what the scriptures declare shall be the state of things at the resurrection and the final judgment. Both by the granting of indulgences for many thousands of years, and by other practices and assumptions current in the church of Rome, the doctrine of purgatory is identified with a supposed continuation of the imprisonment of many persons in the middle state long after the end of the world. But there will be a resurrection, not of three classes of men, but of only two. There will be ‘a resurrection unto life,’ and ‘a resurrection unto condemnation,’—‘a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust.’ Those who ‘sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’ ‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.’ Not an individual will be found connected with the supposed purgatory in the resurrection; and not an individual will be left apart from the two great classes of men to inhabit it after the final judgment. But if the Romish doctrine respecting it be untrue in reference to these great epochs, it must be equally untrue respecting it in reference to any preceding period.

The Romish doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent likewise with the hope and the desire which Christians are warranted to cherish in anticipating death. ‘We know,’ says the apostle, speaking of himself in common with all true Christians, ‘that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,’ 2 Cor. v. 1—8. How utterly incompatible are these breathings and desires and confident expectations of believers, with the notion that all of them may, and that some of them must, pass at death into a state of severe suffering! They are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord; so that, no sooner do they leave ‘this tabernacle,’ than they participate in the holiness and the joys of heaven. Their Lord has gone ‘to prepare a place for them, and he will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also.’ His prayer on their behalf, even when he was on earth, and a prayer which he continues to make, and which, belonging to his intercessory function as ‘the High-priest of their profession,’ invariably prevails, is, ‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.’ They, accordingly, have ‘fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them;

which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for them entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.' They can, therefore, have no reason to fear, no ground to anticipate, even the risk of their being shut up, for a season after death, in the flames of a purgatorial state.

Again, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with the representations of scripture as to the state, immediately after death, of Christians in particular, and of mankind in general. Respecting Christians such statements as these occur: 'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' 'But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.' 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,' Rev. xiv. 13; Heb. xi. 16; Phil. i. 21, 23, Rom. xiv. 7—9. All these texts, and some others, either declare or assume that for Christians to die, is to be with Christ, to rest from their labours, to cease from suffering, to enter into heaven. As to mankind, in general, they are represented as passing at death either into one of two separate and enduring states, or into a condition of unalterably fixed character and destiny, where no change of prospects or position can be undergone: 'And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.' 'Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies' sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?' 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,' Luke xvi. 22, 23; Psal. vi. 4, 5; Eccl. ix. 10; Rev. xxii. 11; John iii. 36. How entirely irreconcilable are all these statements with the notion of probation and purgation, and change of character and state in a future world!

Finally, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with revealed facts respecting the state of departed souls. John saw in vision an innumerable company of deceased believers who were all 'arrayed in white robes, and stood before the throne, and served God day and night in his temple,' having 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;' and 'they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests,' Rev. vii. 13—17; v. 9. John was visited also by a glorified spirit whom he mistook for the Angel of the covenant, and who said to him, 'I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God,' Rev. xxii. 9. When Christ was transfigured on the mount, before his disciples, 'there talked with him,' we are told, 'two men, Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,' Luke ix. 30. If Lazarus and the rich man, in the parable, be viewed as representing the two great classes of mankind, they exhibit the whole of our race as passing at death either into paradise or into a place of endless torments; and even if viewed merely as individuals, they are instances, on the one hand, of a departed believer being in a state of bliss, and, on the other hand, of a departed unbeliever being in a state of incurable woe, Luke xvi. 19—26. 'Enoch,' we are told, 'was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for, before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God,' Heb. xi. 5. These are all the instances I remember in which the divine word reveals facts respecting the condition of any deceased men; and, excepting the case of the rich man, who is stated to have lifted up his eyes in hell, they all represent them—in connexion with their having believed on Christ and served God on earth—as being in a glorified or heavenly state. Where, then, can there be the shadow of evidence, or even of apology, for the notion of purgatory?—ED.]

THE RESURRECTION.

QUESTION LXXXVII. *What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?*

ANSWER. We are to believe that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls for ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ; the bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection, as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body, and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonour by him as an offended Judge.

IN discussing the foregoing Answers, we have considered the soul and body as separated by death, the body turned to corruption, and the soul immediately en-

tering into a state of happiness or misery. We are now led to insist on the doctrine of the resurrection, when these two constituent parts of man shall be reunited. First, we shall endeavour to explain what we are to understand by the resurrection of the dead. Secondly, we shall prove that there is nothing in this doctrine contrary to reason; at least, if we consider it as a supernatural and divine work. Thirdly, we shall observe that this doctrine could not be known by the light of nature, and that we believe it as founded in divine revelation. Fourthly, we shall state what arguments are contained in scripture for the proof of it; some of which might be taken from the Old Testament, and others from the New, in which it is more clearly revealed. Fifthly, we shall answer some of the most material objections brought against it. Sixthly, we shall consider the resurrection as universal, as it is here styled a general resurrection of the dead from the beginning of time to Christ's second coming; yet with this exception, that they who are found alive shall be changed. Lastly, we shall consider the condition in which the body shall be raised; on the one hand, those circumstances of honour and glory which respect more especially the resurrection of the just, and, on the other hand, those circumstances of dishonour inflicted by Christ, as an offended Judge, which shall characterize the resurrection of the wicked.

The Meaning of the Resurrection.

We shall first consider what we are to understand by the resurrection of the dead. We sometimes find the word taken in scripture in a metaphorical sense, for God's doing those things for his church which could not be brought about any otherwise than by his extraordinary and supernatural power. Sometimes the work of regeneration is set forth by this figurative way of speaking; they who are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' are said to be quickened; and our Saviour says, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.'^u But we are at present to understand the word 'resurrection' in a proper sense, as denoting that change which shall pass upon the body when it shall be delivered from the state of corruption into which it was brought at death, and shall be reunited to the soul. This is distinguished in a following verse from the metaphorical sense of the word: our Lord says, 'All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'^x This includes not merely the repairing but the rebuilding of the frame of nature, which was not only decayed but dissolved in death; or the gathering together of those particles of matter of which the body was before constituted, it having been turned not only into corruption but into common dust. A new body, as to its form and qualities, is thus erected out of its old materials; otherwise it could not be called a resurrection. It is said, indeed, that the body shall not in all respects be the same that it was when separated from the soul. The apostle compares it to 'a grain of wheat' sown in the ground, which, when it springs up, is not altogether the same as it was before; for 'God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.'^y But though very different as to its qualities, it is the same in substance, as it consists of the same materials. This will be farther considered when we speak concerning the condition of the body when raised from the dead, as raised with a design that it should be reunited to the soul, as immediately afterwards reunited to it, and as placed in a union with it which shall be indissoluble and eternal.

The Resurrection not Contrary to Reason.

We shall now consider that there is nothing contrary to reason, or impossible from the nature of the thing, which might have a tendency to overthrow this doctrine; especially if we consider the resurrection as a supernatural and divine work, brought about by the almighty power of God. If we look no farther than the

u John v. 25.

x Ver. 28.

y 1 Cor xv. 37, 38.

power of natural causes, we may conclude it to be impossible for a creature to effect the resurrection, as much as it was at first to produce the body of man out of the dust of the ground. But it is not impossible with God. He who gave life and being to all things, and, by his sovereign will, puts a period to that life which had been for some time continued by his power and providence, can give a new life to the body; especially if there be nothing in this work which renders it unmeet for it to be performed by him. Now, that there is nothing in the nature of the thing which renders a resurrection impossible, appears from the fact that death, though it is a dissolution of the frame of nature, does not annihilate the body. If the body, indeed, were annihilated at death, then it would be impossible, or contrary to the nature of things, that there should be a resurrection of it. The bringing of it again into a state of existence would, in that case, be a new creation; which, though it would not be too great a work for omnipotence, could not be styled a resurrection, or a restoring of the same body to life which was separated from the soul to which it was once united. But when we suppose that the matter of which the body consisted is still in being, and nothing is necessary to the raising of it from the dead but the re-collecting of the various particles of it, and forming these again into a body fitted to receive the soul, the work is not in its own nature impossible; nor does it infer a contradiction, so as to imply that it cannot be brought about by divine power.

That this may more fully appear, let it be considered that nothing which God has brought into being can be annihilated but by an act of his will; for nothing can defeat or disannul his providence, which upholdeth all things that were brought into being by the word of his power. It is certain, also, that God has given us no ground to conclude that any part of his material creation has been or shall be turned into nothing. It hence follows that the particles of all the bodies of men who once lived in this world, though turned to corruption or dust, are as much in being as ever they were, though not in the same form.—Again, it is certain that God, who made and upholdeth all things, has a perfect knowledge of that which is the object of his power, since his understanding is infinite. Hence he knows where the scattered dust or the smallest particles of matter which once constituted the bodies of men are reserved. And when we speak of a resurrection from the dead, we mean the gathering of these particles together, and the disposing of them in such a way that new bodies shall be framed out of them. Though, therefore, this could not be done by any but God, it is not impossible, from the nature of the thing, for him to do it. That he will do it will be considered, when we come more directly to the proof of this doctrine.

The Resurrection a Doctrine purely of Revelation.

We proceed to consider the doctrine of the resurrection as a matter of pure revelation, such as we could not have known by the light of nature, without the assistance of scripture-light. Something, indeed, might be known by reason concerning the immortality of the soul, and its being, not only capable of happiness or misery in a future state, but dealt with there according to its behaviour in this world. But when we inquire into the part which the body shall bear in that state, whether it shall be raised and reunited to the soul, to be for ever a partner with it in what respects its state in another world, or whether it shall remain for ever in a state of corruption, we can obtain no information by the light of nature.

There are, indeed, many things found in the writings of the heathen which discover them to have had some notion of what bears a resemblance to a resurrection; as when they speak concerning the transmigration of souls, or their living in other bodies, when separated from those which they formerly were united to. Others of them speak concerning the general conflagration, and the restoration of all things, immediately after, to their former state; as well as give some hints which are contained in their writings, concerning particular persons who have been raised from the dead, at least, pretended to have been so. What we find of this nature very much resembles the fabulous account we have in the popish legends of miracles, said to have been wrought, though without proof. Thus we are told of one Aristeas,

the Proconnesian, who had a power of expiring and returning to life at pleasure, and relating what he had seen in a separate state.^z The same is reported of one Hermotimus of Clazomena.^a But the most famous story of this kind, is what is related by Plato,^b and transcribed from him by Eusebius,^c concerning one Er, the son of Armenius; who, after he was slain in battle, and had continued ten days among other dead bodies, was brought home to his house, and two days after, being laid on his funeral pile, came to life again. This Plato, while he is relating it, calls little better than a fable.^d It was also treated by others with ridicule; how much soever it was believed by some who regarded reports of it more than solid evidence of its truth. I might mention others, also, who are said, by heathen writers, to have been translated into heaven in their bodies and souls.^e What they relate concerning these may have originated from what they had received by tradition, concerning the translation of Enoch and Elijah; and might have been invented with the view of giving their religion as great reputation as that of the Jews. But notwithstanding these particular instances related by them, of some translated or others raised from the dead, there were very few of them who believed the doctrine of the resurrection, while some treated it with as much contempt as we do the account they give of particular persons raised from the dead.^f Accordingly, when the apostle Paul encountered the Epicureans and Stoics at Athens, 'preaching to them Jesus and the resurrection,' they called him 'babbler,'^g and insinuated that he seemed to be 'a setter forth of strange gods.' Œcumenius and Chrysostom think that they supposed he reckoned 'the resurrection' among the gods,^h as well as Jesus, whose divinity he doubtless maintained. But whether they were so stupid as thus to wrest his words, is not material. It is no wonder to find the Epicureans treating this doctrine with ridicule; for they, denying the immortality of the soul, could not entertain the least idea of the resurrection of the body in any sense. The Stoics, however, though they did not own the doctrine of the resurrection, yet could not think it so strange a doctrine as some others might do; for they held that the soul, after death, continued at least as long as the body; and they knew very well that many of the philosophers strenuously maintained the transmigration of souls. Indeed, the doctrine of transmigration was held by many of them, as well as by the Platonists and Pythagoreans. Hence, the doctrine of the resurrection, though it differed from it, could not seem so strange

z This is reported in a very fabulous manner, and is reckoned no other than an idle tale by Pliny, who mentions it among other stories of the like nature. Vid. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. lii. Animam Aristæi etiam visam evolentem ex ore, in Proconneso, corvi effigie, magna quæ sequitur fabulositate. This is also mentioned as a fable by Origen. Vid. Orig. in lib. iii. Contr. Cels.

a Vid. Plin. Nat. Hist. cap. lii. Reperimus inter exempla Hermotimi Clazomenii animam relicto corpore, errare solitam, vagantem è longinquo multa annuñciare, quæ nisi à præsentibus nosci non possent. But by the following words he speaks of him as not dead, but in a kind of *deliquium*; corpore interim semianimi. Yet it was given out by many, that he died and rose again very often. This Lucian himself laughs at as a foolish tale. Vid. Lucian. Enc. Muse.

b Vid. Plat. de Repub. lib. x.

c Vid. Euseb. Præparat. Evang. lib. xi. cap. xxxv. It is also mentioned by Plutarch, Symp. lib. ix. cap. v.

d Macrobius speaking concerning it, in Somn. Scip. lib. i. cap. i. represents Cicero as being under a great concern, that this story of Er was ridiculed by many who did not stick to say, Visum fuisse Erem, vitam effundere, animamque recipere, quam reverà non amiserat. See more to this purpose in Huet. Demonst. Evang. Prop. ix. cap. cxli.

e See a late learned writer, Hody, on the resurrection of the same body; who refers to several places in heathen writers, of whom some believed it, and others exposed it as fabulous, pages 13—16.

f Thus Pliny, who a little before related several stories of persons raised from the dead, and yet calls the doctrine of the resurrection, 'puerile deliramentum.' Vid. Ejusd. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. lv. and elsewhere he speaks of it as a thing in its own nature impossible; and therefore concludes it to be one of those things which God cannot do. Lib. ii. cap. vii. Ne Deum quidem posse omnia, nec mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos. Minutius Felix, also, Vid. Ejusd. Octav. cap. xi. brings in a heathen, who was his friend, railing at it, without any decency, as though it was no better than an old wives' fable; and the principal argument he produces, is, that he supposes it impossible for a body that was burnt to ashes to spring up into life again. Celsus, likewise, speaking concerning the impossibility of God's doing any thing contrary to nature, reckons this among those things. Vid. Orig. Contr. Cels. lib. v. page 240, and says, the hope of it is more worthy of worms than men; and he styles it an abominable, as well as an impossible thing, which God neither can, nor will do.

g Acts xvii. 18.

h Ἀναστασις.

and unheard of a notion, that they should reckon it among the gods. It plainly appears, however, that, whatever confused ideas the heathen might have entertained by tradition concerning it, the doctrine of the resurrection could not be learned by the light of nature. It follows, then, that we must look for a satisfactory account of it from scripture. Accordingly, when the Sadducees put a stupid question to our Saviour concerning the woman that had seven husbands, who successively died, and requested to know whose 'wife she should be in the resurrection,' plainly designing to express their opposition to this doctrine, rather than a desire of information as to the question proposed; our Saviour, in his reply to them, refers them to 'the scriptures,'ⁱ as the fountain whence a clear and satisfactory knowledge of the doctrine is to be derived, as well as from 'the power of God.' This divine perfection argues the possibility of the resurrection; the justice and goodness of God, its expediency. But the scriptures, which contain a revelation of his will, represent it as certain.

Proofs of the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

We are thus led to consider some arguments contained in or deduced from scripture for the proof of the doctrine.

1. We shall first adduce those proofs which we have in the Old Testament. These I choose first to insist on, because I am sensible there are many who think that the church knew nothing of it, till it was revealed by our Saviour in the New Testament. This notion very much detracts from the importance of the doctrine, as well as renders the state of those who lived before Christ's incarnation very uncomfortable; since the saints, according to this opinion, must have had no hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life. The notion is defended by many who extend the darkness of the dispensation farther than what is convenient. Among others, it is generally maintained by the Socinians, probably with this design, that as, according to them, our Saviour had little else in view, in coming into the world, but to lead men into the knowledge of some things which they were ignorant of before, this might be reckoned one of those doctrines which he came to communicate. Thus Volkelius denies that there were any promises of eternal life made to the church under the Old Testament; and concludes that there was no one who had the least surmise that any such doctrine was contained in those scriptures which we commonly bring thence to prove it.^k To give countenance to this opinion, several quotations are often taken from Jewish writers since our Saviour's time, who either speak doubtfully of this matter, or give occasion to think that they did not understand those scriptures which establish the doctrine of the resurrection, in the Old Testament, as having any reference to it.

It may hence not be amiss for us to inquire, What were the sentiments of some of the Jews respecting this doctrine? Every one knows that there was one sect amongst them, namely, the Sadducees, who distinguished themselves from others by denying it. Josephus gives the largest account of any one, concerning another sect, namely, the Essenes, who affected to lead a recluse life in their respective colleges, and were governed by laws peculiar to themselves. Among other things which he relates concerning their conduct and sentiments, he says that it was an opinion established among them, that the bodies of men were corruptible, and the matter of which they were compounded not perpetual, though the soul remained for ever. Then he represents them as speaking, according to the Pythagorean and Platonic way, concerning the body being the prison of the soul, and its remaining when released from it, and of the soul dwelling in a pleasant place, and enjoying many things which tend to make it happy,^l &c. His account of them, however, is

ⁱ Matt. xxii. 29.

^k Vid. Volkeli. de Vera Relig. lib. iii. cap. xi. Apparet promissionem vitæ sempiternæ in prisco illo fœdere factam minime fuisse. And in a following part of this chapter, wherein he professedly treats on this subject, he adds; Quæ apertis luculentissimisque verbis ut in nova scriptura fieri videamus, hoc Dei beneficium nobis polliceantur. Ex quorum munere, hoc quo de agimus, nequaquam esse hunc patet, quod antequam Christus illud explicaret, nemo unquam extitit, qui vel suspicari auderet, tale quid illo comprehendere.

^l Vid. Joseph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. vii. Καὶ γὰρ λέγεται παρ' αὐτοῖς ἡδε ἡ δοξα φθάρσα μὲν εἶνα τὰ σώματα, καὶ τὴν ὕλην οὐ μόνιμον αὐτοῖς, &c.

short, and the expression on which rests the whole stress of the supposition, of their having denied the doctrine of the resurrection, is a little ambiguous, namely, that the bodies of men are corruptible, and their matter not perpetual; for this may be understood as agreeing with the common faith concerning man's mortality, and the body's turning to corruption, and not remaining in the same state in which it was. His account, therefore, seems to leave it doubtful, whether they asserted or denied the resurrection. It is also supposed that Philo denied this doctrine, from several passages observed in his writings, which a late learned writer takes notice of.^m Philo's, however, was only the opinion of a single person, who, according to his general character, seemed to be halting between two opinions, namely, the doctrine of Moses, and the philosophy of Plato. I take his sentiments about this matter to be nothing else but an affectation of thinking or speaking agreeably to the Platonic philosophy; which had probably given such a tincture to his notions, that he might deny the resurrection. And if the Essenes, before-mentioned, should be allowed to have denied it, they received it from their attachment to the same, or at least the Pythagorean, philosophy. But we cannot hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was denied by the main body of the Jews, or the greater part of them, or by any excepting those who were led out of the way by the writings of the philosophers. Accordingly, the apostle Paul warns the church to 'beware of philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,'ⁿ as foreseeing that some of them in after-ages would, in many respects, corrupt the doctrines of the gospel, by accommodating them to or explaining them by what they found in the writings of the heathen philosophers, as Origen, Justin Martyr, and some others did; and he seems to take the hint from what had been observed relating to the corruption of the Jewish faith, by those who were attached to the philosophers. Thus concerning the opinion of those Jews, who are supposed to have denied the doctrine of the resurrection.

On the other hand, there are several Rabbinical writers, who sufficiently intimate their belief of this doctrine; though, it is true, some of them infer it from such premises as discover great weakness in their method of reasoning. The learned Bishop Pearson observes that they produce several places out of Moses' writings, which, when the resurrection is believed, may, in some sort, serve to illustrate it, but can, in no degree, be thought to reveal so great a mystery.^o Dr. Lightfoot produces other proofs, which they bring for this doctrine, as little to the purpose;¹ of which all the use that can be made is, that we may observe from them that they believe the doctrine we are maintaining to be contained in scripture. Whether or not they were able to defend it by showing the force of those arguments on which it is founded, is not much to our present purpose; my design in referring to their writings being to prove that this doctrine was embraced by the Jews, in the ages before, as well as in those after, our Saviour's time. It is true, the Talmud and other writings which are generally quoted for the proof of it, are of later date; and

^m See Dr. Hody on the Resurrection, &c., pages 56—59.

ⁿ Col. ii. 8.

^o See Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Artic. 11, who observes, from their writings, that because, in the formation of man, mentioned in Gen. ii. 7, Moses uses the word *ריצר*, and in the formation of beasts, verse 19, the word *ריצר*, the former having two jods, the latter but one, the beasts are made but once, but man twice, that is, once in his generation, and the second time in his resurrection. And they strangely apprehend a proof of the resurrection to be contained in the malediction, Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;' as if it had been said, 'Thou art now dust while thou livest; and, after death, thou shalt return unto this dust, that is, thou shalt live again, as thou dost now.' And those words in Exod. xv. 1, 'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel,' they render 'he shall sing,' namely, after the resurrection, in the life to come, and thence infer this doctrine. These arguments could afford but very small satisfaction to the Sadducees, while they omitted to insist on other pregnant proofs.

^p See vol. ii. Heb. and Talmud. Exercitat. on John iv. 25, wherein he says, that they pretend to prove it from Deut. xxxi. 16, where God says to Moses, 'Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and rise again;' which is an addition to, as well as a perversion of, the text, which says, 'The people shall rise up and go a whoring,' &c. And, page 541 and 787, he represents them as proving it from Josh. viii. 30, where it is said that 'Joshua built an altar unto the Lord,' which they translate, 'he shall build an altar,' supposing this to be after the resurrection. And, Psal. lxxxiv. 4, 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee,' they suppose is meant of their praising God after the resurrection. See many other absurd methods of reasoning to the same purpose, referred to by him in the same place.

the most ancient of the Chaldee paraphrases now extant, is supposed to have been written about that time, or at least but little before it. Nor are there any uninspired writings relating to the Jewish affairs, more ancient, except those which we generally call Apocryphal; which most suppose to have been written about one hundred and fifty years before the Christian era. Now, it is very evident that about that time the doctrine of the resurrection was believed by the Jewish church; for the author of the book of Maccabees, in the history of the martyrdom of the seven brethren in the reign of Antiochus,^q represents some of them in the agonies of death, as expressing firm belief of a resurrection to eternal life, their mother, in the meanwhile, encouraging them from the same consideration. These, it is more than probable, the apostle includes in the number of those noble Old Testament worthies who were 'tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection;' ^r which is an undeniable evidence that the church at that time believed the doctrine of the resurrection. All that I shall add under this Head is, that how weak soever the reasoning of some Jewish writers concerning this subject has been, there are others who give substantial proofs from the Old Testament; a circumstance which argues not only that they believed it, but that their belief proceeded from a just conviction of its truth. They give the same sense of some of those scriptures which are generally produced in proof of it which we do.^s

The first scripture which we shall take notice of is what contains the vision concerning 'the valley which was full of bones,' which were 'very dry.'^t God says to the prophet, 'Son of man, Can these bones live?' and the prophet replies, 'O Lord God, thou knowest.' Afterwards we read of God's 'laying sinews, and bringing up flesh upon them, covering them with skin, and putting breath into them,' and their being immediately after restored to life. I am sensible that they who are on the other side of the question, pretend that this passage is no proof of a resurrection; because the design of the vision was to illustrate and make way for the prediction mentioned in the following verses, concerning the deliverance of God's people from the Babylonish captivity. But what has weight with me is, that God would never have made use of a similitude to lead them into this doctrine, taken from a thing which they had no manner of idea of. If, however, we suppose that they believed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, agreeably to the literal sense of the words made use of to illustrate the deliverance from Babylon, then the argument is plain and easy, and is as if it had been said, 'As certainly as you have ground to believe that the dead shall be raised at the last day,—an event which, though it could not be brought about by any natural means, yet shall be effected by the power of God; so your deliverance, how unlikely soever it may appear to those who look no farther than second causes, shall come to pass by God's extraordinary power and providence, and will be as life from the dead.'" But it is farther objected that, when the prophet was asked by God whether 'these dry bones could live,' he seemed to be in doubt about it; so that he had no idea of the resurrection of the dead. We reply, that his doubt respected an event which should immediately follow. He knew that God could put life into these bones; but whether he would do it now or not, he could not tell. His doubt, therefore, does not imply any disbelief of the doctrine of the resurrection at the last day. Indeed, this scripture, how little soever it may seem to some to make for the doctrine we are maintaining, is alleged by others as an undeniable proof of it. Tertullian expressly says, that the vision re-

q 2 Maccab. vii. 9, 11, 14, 23, 29.

r Heb. xi. 35.

s Thus Josephus Jacchiades, referred to by Witsius in Symb. Exercit. xxvi. § 41, in explaining the famous text in Daniel xii. 2, says, *Et tunc fiet miraculum resurrectionis mortuorum: Nam multi dormientium in terra pulverulenta expergiscuntur, hi ad vitam æternam, qui sunt sancti; illi vero ad opprobria et detestationem æternam; qui sunt impii. Quorum resurrectionis causa est, ut impii fateantur palam, suam fidem esse falsam, et eos qui ipsis fidem habuerint, prosecutos fuisse vanitatem atque evanuisse, ipsique agnoscant suos majores falsitatem possedissee.* And Menasseh Ben Israel, de Resurr. Mort. lib. ii. cap. viii. proves it from the same scripture. More to the same purpose may be seen in Dr. Hody on the Resurrection, page 72. et seq., who quotes several of the Talmudical writers, as signifying their belief of this doctrine; and especially Pocock in Maimon. Port. Mos. cap. vi. who produces a multitude of quotations to the same purpose; in which some assert this doctrine without proof, others establish it by more solid arguments, and some mix a great many absurd notions with it, which we shall at present pass over.

t Ezek. xxxvii. 1. et seq.

corded in it would have been a very insignificant one if this doctrine were not true.^u Jerome speaks to the same purpose, supposing that God would never illustrate any truth which the Jews were in doubt of, by a similitude taken from an incredible fiction.^x And Menasseh Ben Israel, a learned Jew, supposes this text to be an express and infallible proof of the resurrection; and his viewing it in this light plainly argues that he thought the Jews, in former ages, were convinced of this doctrine by it.^y

But supposing this scripture not to be reckoned sufficient to evince the truth of the doctrine, there is another which has more weight, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.'^z Job, as is generally supposed, lived in Moses' time; so that, if it can be made to appear that he professed his faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, we may conclude that the church was acquainted with it in the early ages. Now, nothing seems more evident, from the plain sense of the words, than that he here professes his faith in the doctrine, and encourages himself from the hope of future blessedness, both in soul and body, at Christ's second coming in the last day. It is with a great deal of difficulty that they who deny this doctrine, are obliged to account for the sense of this text, so as to evade the force of the argument taken from it. They suppose that Job intends nothing but a firm persuasion that he should be recovered from the state of misery in which he then was, which affected not only his mind, but his body, as it was 'smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown,'^a his flesh being 'clothed with worms,' and his 'skin broken and become loathsome.'^b They accordingly understand him to say, 'I shall be redeemed from this affliction, and brought into a happy state before I die.' They thus suppose that the words are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, and hence do not prove the doctrine of the resurrection. But this will appear to be a very great perversion of the sense of this text, if we consider in how solemn a manner he introduces the passage: 'Oh that my words,' says he, 'were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever!' This language seems to import that he had something to communicate, which was of far greater moment than the account of his deliverance from the afflictions he was under in this world. It hence seems more agreeable to understand the words as denoting the great and important truth, in which all believers are concerned, relating to Christ's second coming, and the happiness which his saints shall then enjoy in soul and body. This deserves to be written with a pen of iron, that it may be transmitted to all generations. Again, it is evident that he is here speaking of something which should be done, not while he lived, but in the end of time; for he considers his 'Redeemer' as 'standing in the latter day upon the earth.' The person whom he here speaks of as his Redeemer, is doubtless our Saviour, who is frequently described, both in the Old and New Testament, under that character. If at any time God the Father is called the Redeemer of his people, it may be observed that he is never said, in redeeming them, to make himself visible to their bodily eyes, or to stand upon earth,—much less to do this in the latter or last day, in which Christ is said to come again in a visible manner, to raise the dead and judge the world. Now, this Job intends when he says, 'In my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' Moreover, it is also evident that he intends something which should befall him after his death, and not merely a deliverance from his present misery in this world; for he speaks of his 'skin' or body as devoured by 'worms,' and of 'his reins as consumed within him,'—language which can

^u Vid. Tertull. de Resurrect. Carn. cap. xxx. Non posset de ossibus figura componi, si non id ipsum, et ossibus eventurum esset.

^x Vid. Hieron. in Ezek. xxxvii. Nunquam poneretur similitudo resurrectionis, ad restitutionem Israelitici populi significandam, nisi staret ipsa resurrectio, et futura crederetur; quia nemo de rebus non extantibus incerta confirmat.

^y Vid. Menasseh Ben Isr. lib. i. de Resurrect. cap. ii. § 4. Hic textus expressus est, et infallibilis quo sine omne dubio resurrectio probatur.

^z Job xix. 25—27.

^a Chap. ii. 7.

^b Chap. vii. 5.

mean only a state of corruption in death. Further, it does not appear that Job had any intimation concerning the change of his condition in this world, before God turned his captivity, having first made him sensible of his error in 'uttering that which he understood not,' when, notwithstanding the injuries he had received from them, he testified his reconciliation to his friends by praying for them.^c Indeed, he was so far from expecting happiness in this life that he says, 'Mine eye shall no more see good,'^d that is in this world; and he hence takes occasion to meditate on his own mortality in the following words, 'The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more; thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.' After this he prays, 'Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave,'^e &c. Besides, immediately before he speaks of his 'Redeemer' as 'living,' and of the deliverance which he should obtain in 'the latter day,' he earnestly desires the compassion of his friends: 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.' Now, this does not well agree with the supposition that he had any expectation of a state of happiness in this world. In that case he would not have needed their pity. He might only have convinced them of the truth of his expectation, and it would have given a turn to their behaviour towards him; for we find that, when God blessed his latter end more than his beginning, every one was as ready to comfort him concerning the evil that the Lord had brought upon him, and show their very great respect to him by offering him presents, as any were before to reproach him. On the whole, therefore, it is very evident that Job is speaking, not concerning his deliverance from his present evils in this world, but of a perfect deliverance from all evil in the great day of the resurrection. We must hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection is plainly asserted in this scripture. Indeed, Jerome says that no one who wrote after Christ has more plainly maintained the doctrine of the resurrection than Job, who lived before him, does in this scripture.^f

There is another scripture from which, if I do not mistake the sense of it, Job appears to have had a steady faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, and to have been firmly persuaded concerning his happiness when raised from the dead. This scripture is in chap. xiv. 13—15, where he says, 'Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past;' that is, till a full end is put to all the afflictive providences which men are liable to in this world, namely, till the day of Christ's second coming; 'or that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me;' that is, that thou wouldst deliver me from the evils which I now endure. As to the former of these expedients, namely, his deliverance by death, he counts it a blessing, because he takes it for granted that 'if a man die he shall live again,'^g and therefore says, 'all the days of my appointed time,' that is, not of the appointed time of life, but the time appointed that he should lie in the grave, in which he desired that God would hide him,—'all the days of my appointed time I shall wait,' or remain, 'till my change come,' that is, till I shall be changed from a state of mortality to that of life. And he goes on in the following words, 'Thou shalt call,' that is, by thy power thou shalt raise me, 'and I will answer thee,' or come forth out of my grave; and hereby thou wilt make it known that thou 'hast a desire to the work of thine hands.' It may be objected to this sense of the words, that Job says, 'Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep;'^h so that he is so far from expecting relief from his misery in the resurrection, that he seems plainly to deny it. I answer, that he does not deny the doctrine of the resurrection in the words, 'They shall not be raised from the dead till the heavens be no more;' he only seems to conclude that the dead should rise when the frame of nature was changed, as it will be at the last day, in which the heavens shall be no more. I confess this sense is not commonly given of these verses, nor any argu-

^c Job xlii. 3, 10.

^d Chap. vii. 7.

^e Chap. xiv. 13.

^f Vid. Hieron. Epist. 61. ad Pammach. de error. Job. Hieros. Quid hâc prophetiâ manifestius? Nullus tam apertè post Christum, quàm iste ante Christum de resurrectione loquitur.

^g Verse 14. The words are put in the form of an interrogation, which sometimes argues a strong negation, but not always, since here it seems to imply a concession that he should live again.

^h Job xiv. 12.

ment drawn from them to prove a resurrection from the dead ; so that I would not be too tenacious of my own sense of them. Yet I cannot but think it more probable than the common sense ; and if so, the passage may be considered as a proof of the doctrine which we are maintaining.

There is another scripture which plainly proves the doctrine of the resurrection, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.'ⁱ This scripture is brought by several Rabbinical writers as a proof of this doctrine ; and the words are so express that it will be very difficult to evade the force of them. It is true, some modern writers, who are ready to conclude that the Old Testament is silent as to the doctrine of the resurrection, take the words in a metaphorical sense, and understand them to mean, the deliverance of the church from those grievous persecutions which they were under in the reign of Antiochus. Accordingly, 'sleeping in the dust' is taken by them for lying in holes and caves of the earth, the Jews being forced to seek protection there from the fury of the tyrant. But this cannot be properly called 'sleeping in the dust of the earth ;' nor is their deliverance from this persecution consistent with 'the contempt' which should be cast on some who were raised out of the dust ; nor could the happiness which others enjoyed in this deliverance be called 'everlasting life.' Besides, it must be a straining of the metaphor to a great degree, to apply to their wise men and teachers, after this deliverance, the words, 'They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.' This interpretation, then, has such difficulties attending it, that every person who is not prepossessed with prejudice must adopt the literal sense of the text, and confess that it proves the doctrine of the resurrection. The only difficulty which is pretended to be involved in this literal sense is its being said, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake,' while the doctrine we are defending is that of an universal resurrection. But as we shall have occasion to notice this difficulty under a following Head, we choose to refer it to its proper place, where, according to our designed method, we are to consider that all who have lived from the beginning to the end of time shall be raised.

There are other scriptures in the Old Testament which might be brought to prove this doctrine. Thus God says, 'I kill, and I make alive ;'^k and Hannah, in her song, says, 'The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.'^l I know that 'death' and 'life' are sometimes taken for good and evil ; but why should deliverance from the miseries of this life be represented by the metaphor of a resurrection, and this attributed to the almighty power of God, if the doctrine of the resurrection was reckoned by the church at that time no other than a fiction or chimera, as it must be supposed to have been if they had no idea of it, as not having received it by divine revelation ?

We might, as a farther proof of this doctrine, consider the three instances narrated in the Old Testament of persons raised from the dead, namely, the Shunamite's child, by the prophet Elisha,^m—the man who was cast into his sepulchre, and 'revived and stood on his feet when he touched Elisha's bones,'ⁿ and the widow of Zarephath's son, by the prophet Elijah. In the last of these cases, it is said, Elijah 'cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee let this child's soul come unto him again ;' and accordingly the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.^o We must hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was not unknown to the prophet ; for had he not known it, he could not have directed his prayer to God in faith. These instances of a resurrection of particular persons could not but give occasion to the church at that time to believe the possibility of a resurrection at the last day ; for it might as reasonably be expected that God will exert his power by raising the dead then, as that he would do it at this time, unless there were something in this possible event contrary to his moral perfections. But the resurrection appeared to them, as it does to all who consider him as the governor of the world, and as distributing rewards and punishments to every one according to their works, as not only agreeable to these perfections, but, in some respects, necessary for the illustration of them. We must conclude, therefore, that

i Dan. xii. 2.

m 2 Kings iv. 35.

k Deut. xxxii. 39.

n Chap. xiii. 21.

l 1 Sam. ii. 6.

o 1 Kings xvii. 21, 22.

as they had particular instances of a resurrection, which argued the general resurrection possible, they might easily believe that it should be future ; which is the doctrine that we are maintaining.

We may add that the patriarch Abraham believed the doctrine of the resurrection ; and of course had it some way or other revealed to him, before the word of God was committed to writing. This appears from what the apostle says when speaking concerning his offering Isaac, that ‘ he accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.’^p These words render it evident that he was verily persuaded when he bound Isaac to the altar, and lifted up his hand to slay him, that God would suffer him to do it, otherwise the command to offer him up would have been no trial of his faith ; so that his being prevented from laying his hand on him was an unexpected providence. Now, how could he solve the difficulty which would necessarily follow upon his slaying Isaac ? Had he expected that God would give him another seed instead of Isaac, such an event would not have been an accomplishment of the promise which was given to him, namely, that ‘ in Isaac his seed should be called.’ The only thing, therefore, which he depended on, was that when he had offered him, God would raise him from the dead, and by doing so would fulfil the promise which was made to him concerning the numerous seed which should descend from him. Hence, it cannot be supposed that Abraham was a stranger to the doctrine of the resurrection.

There are other scriptures by which it appears that the doctrine of the resurrection was revealed to the church under the Old Testament dispensation, either from the sense of the words themselves, or from the explanation of them in passages of the New which refer to them. Thus it is said, ‘ Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption ;’^q words which the apostle Peter quotes to prove the resurrection of Christ.^r If David, therefore, knew that the Messiah should be raised from the dead—which, as will be considered under a following Head, is a glorious proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the saints—we cannot suppose that he was a stranger to the latter doctrine.—Again, it is said, ‘ He will swallow up death in victory.’^s These words occur immediately after a prediction of the glorious provision which God would make for his people under the gospel dispensation, which is called, by a metaphorical way of speaking, ‘ A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined ;’^t and of the gospel’s being preached to the Gentiles, which is expressed by his ‘ destroying the face of the covering, and the vail that was spread over all nations.’^u The passage may hence be well supposed to contain a prediction of something consequent on these events, namely, the general resurrection.—Moreover, there is another scripture to the same purpose, ‘ I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction.’^x Now, both this scripture and the former one are referred to by the apostle, as what shall be fulfilled in the resurrection of the dead. He says, ‘ Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?’^y We cannot but think, therefore, that the prophets, and the church in their day, understood the words in the same sense.—There is still another scripture in the Old Testament, in which the premises are laid down whence the conclusion is drawn in the New for the proof of this doctrine, namely, that which narrates how God revealed himself to Moses.^z This our Saviour refers to, and proves from it the doctrine of the resurrection against the Sadducees. ‘ Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living.’^a This argument was so convincing that ‘ certain of the Scribes said, Master, thou hast well said ; and after that, they,’ that is, the Sadducees, ‘ durst not ask him any question at all ;’ so that it silenced, if it did not convince them. There are some, indeed, who, though they conclude that it is a very strong proof of the immortality of the soul, which the Sadducees denied, since that which does

p Heb. xi. 19.

t Isa. xxv. 6.

z Exod. iii. 6.

q Psal. xvi. 10.

u Chap. xxv. 7.

a Luke xx. 37, 38.

r Acts ii. 24—27.

x Hos. xiii. 14.

s Isa. xxv. 18.

y 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55.

not exist cannot be the subject of a promise ; yet are not able to see how the resurrection can be proved from it ; though it is brought by our Saviour for that purpose. But that the force of it may appear, we must consider what is the import of the promise contained in the covenant, that ' God would be the God of Abraham.' This is explained elsewhere, when he told him, ' I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.'^b Abraham, therefore, was given to expect, at the hand of God, all the spiritual and saving blessings of the covenant of grace. But these blessings respect not only the soul, but the body ; and as they are extended to both worlds, the promise of them is an evident proof of the happiness of the saints in their bodies in a future state, and consequently that they shall be raised from the dead.

2. We are now led to consider those arguments to prove the doctrine of the resurrection which are contained in the New Testament, in which it is more fully and expressly revealed than in any other part of scripture. Here we may first take notice of those particular instances in which our Saviour raised persons from the dead in a miraculous way, as the prophets Elijah and Elisha did under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus he raised Jairus' daughter, whom he found dead in the house.^c He raised also the widow's son at Nain, when they were carrying him to the grave ; and he did this in the presence of a great multitude.^d He likewise raised Lazarus from the dead,^e in a very solemn and public manner, after he had been dead four days, his body being then corrupted and laid in the grave, whence Christ called him, and he immediately revived and came forth. These instances of the resurrection of particular persons tended to put the doctrine of the general resurrection out of all manner of doubt. Indeed, it was, at this time, hardly questioned by any excepting the Sadducees. Accordingly, before Christ raised Lazarus, when he only told his sister Martha that he ' should rise again,' she, not then understanding that he designed immediately to raise him from the dead, expressed her faith in the doctrine of the general resurrection : ' I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day ;'^f on which occasion our Saviour replied, ' I am the resurrection and the life,'^g denoting that this work was to be performed by him.

Moreover, this doctrine was asserted and maintained by the apostles, after Christ had given the greatest proof of it in his own resurrection from the dead. It is said that they preached through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead.^h The apostle Paul standing before Felix, and confessing his belief of all things which are written in the law and the prophets, immediately adds that he had ' hope towards God, which they themselves also allow,' that is, the main body of the Jewish nation, ' that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.' He, however, not only asserts but proves it with very great strength of reasoning, in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. The argument which he there insists on, is taken from Christ's resurrection. ' If there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen.'ⁱ Now, Christ's resurrection is a doctrine which could not be denied by any who embraced the Christian religion ; since it was the very foundation of it. But if any one should entertain the least doubt about it, he adds, ' If Christ be not raised from the dead, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins,'^k that is, your hope of justification hereby is ungrounded, ' and they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.' But this none of them could deny ; so that they must have concluded that he had risen from the dead. If it be inquired how this argument proves the general resurrection, he farther says, ' Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'^l Christ's resurrection removes all the difficulties which might afford the least matter of doubt concerning the possibility of the resurrection of the dead ; and his being raised as ' the first-fruits of them that slept,' or as the head of all the elect, who are said to have communion with him in his resurrection, or to be ' risen with him,'^m renders the doctrine of the resurrection of all his saints undeniably certain. As the first-fruits are a part and pledge of the harvest ; so Christ's resurrection is a

^b Gen. xv. 1.^f John xi. 24.^k 1 Cor. xv. 17.^c Matt. ix. 25.^g Ver. 25.^l Ver. 20.^d Luke vi. 11, 14, 15.^h Acts iv. 2.^m Col. iii. 1^e John xi. 43, 44.ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 13.

pledge and earnest of the resurrection of his people. Thus the apostle says elsewhere, 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.'ⁿ Our Saviour, also, when he was discoursing with his disciples concerning his death, and his resurrection which would follow, told them that, though he should be separated for a time from them, and 'the world should see him no more,' yet 'they should see him again;' and he assigned this as a reason, 'Because I live ye shall live also:'^o as if he had said, 'Because I shall be raised from the dead, and live for ever in heaven, you who are my favourites, friends, and followers, shall also be raised and live with me there.' The resurrection of believers, therefore, is plainly evinced from Christ's resurrection.

I might produce many other scriptures out of the New Testament, in which this doctrine is maintained; but we shall proceed to consider what proofs may be deduced from scripture consequences. It may here be observed that our Lord Jesus Christ has, by his death and resurrection, purchased an universal dominion over his subjects, or a right to dispose of them in such a way as will be most conducive to his own glory and their advantage. Thus the apostle speaks of him as 'dying, rising, and reviving, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;' and he infers thence that 'whether we live or die we are the Lord's.'^p Christ being Lord over the dead is expressed in other terms, by his 'having the keys of hell and death;' and this is stated to be the consequence of his 'being alive' after his death, or of his resurrection from the dead.^q We conclude, therefore, that he has a power, as Mediator, to raise the dead. We may add, that he has engaged to do this work, as truly as he did to redeem the souls of his people. When believers are said to be given to him, or purchased by him, it is the whole man that is included. Accordingly, he purchased the bodies as well as the souls of his people, as may be argued from our obligation consequent on his redeeming us to 'glorify him in our bodies' as well as 'in our spirits, which are God's.'^r They are both under his care; and he has undertaken that his people's bodies shall not be lost in the grave. His having done so is very emphatically expressed, when he is represented as saying, 'This is the will of the Father which hath sent me,'^s or is contained in the commission which I received from him, when he invested me with the office of Mediator, 'that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' What should be the reason that he here speaks of things rather than persons, if he had not a peculiar regard to the bodies of believers? As these are the subjects of his power when raised from the dead, so they are the objects of his care; and therefore he will raise them up at the last day.

We might farther consider Christ's dominion as extended to the wicked as well as the righteous. He is not, indeed, their federal head; but he is appointed to be their Judge. Hence, though they are neither the objects of his special love, nor redeemed by his blood, nor the dutiful and obedient subjects of his kingdom, he has a right to demand them to come forth out of their graves, to appear before his tribunal; for it is said, 'God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.'^t Elsewhere, also, it is said, that he was 'ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.'^u Hence, we read that he shall 'sit upon the throne of his glory;' that 'before him shall be gathered all nations;'^x and that, as is stated in the following verses, he shall determine the final state, both of the righteous and the wicked. Now, this general judgment is described more particularly as being immediately after the universal resurrection. It is said, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened,'^y—language, as will be observed under our next Answer, which respects his judging the world; and in order to this, it is farther said, that 'the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their

n Rom. viii. 11.

r 1 Cor. vi. 20.

x Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

o John xiv. 19.

s John vi. 39, 40.

p Rom. xiv. 8, 9.

t Acts xvii. 31.

q Rev. i. 18.

u Chap. x. 42.

y Rev. xx. 12, 13.

works.' Besides, as Christ is represented as a Judge, it is necessary that he should execute his vindictive justice against his enemies, and punish them as their sins deserve. But this respects not only the soul but the body. Hence, Christ, that he may secure the glory of his justice, shall raise the bodies of sinners, that he may punish them according to their works; and therefore he is said to be the object of fear, because he is 'able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'^z

We have thus endeavoured to prove the doctrine of the resurrection by arguments taken from the Old and the New Testament, and from those scripture consequences whence it may be plainly deduced. How much soever, then, it may be thought a strange and incredible doctrine, by those who have no other light to guide them but that of nature; it will be generally believed by all whose faith is founded upon divine revelation, and who adore the infinite power and impartial justice of God, the governor of the world. Indeed, it is not attended with such difficulties arising from the nature of the thing, as many pretend; since we have several emblems in nature which seem to illustrate it. These are very elegantly represented by some of the Fathers, and especially by Tertullian;^a whom the learned and excellent Bishop Pearson refers to and imitates in his style and mode of expression.^b His words are these, "As the day dies into night, so doth the summer into winter. The sap is said to descend into the root, and there it lies buried in the ground. The earth is covered with snow, or crusted with frost, and becomes a general sepulchre. When the spring appeareth, all begin to rise; the plants and flowers peep out of their graves, revive, and grow, and flourish. This is the annual resurrection. The corn by which we live, and for want of which we perish with famine, is notwithstanding cast upon the earth, and buried in the ground, with a design that it may corrupt, and being corrupted, may revive and multiply. Our bodies are fed with this constant experiment, and we continue this present life by succession of resurrections. Thus all things are repaired by corrupting, are preserved by perishing, and revive by dying. And can we think that

^z Matt. x. 28.

^a Vid. Minut. Fel. in Octav. § 33. Vide adeo quàm in solatium nostri Resurrectionem futuram omnis natura meditatur. Sol demergit, et nascitur; astra labuntur, et redeunt; flores occidunt, et reviviscunt; post senium arbusta frondescunt; semina non nisi corrupta revirescunt; ita corpus in sepulchro ut arbores in hyberno occultant virorem ariditate mentita. Expectandum nobis etiam corporis ver est, &c.

^b See his Exposition on the Creed, Artic. xi. and Tertull. de Resurr. Carn. cap. xii. Aspice nunc ad ipsa quoque exempla divinæ potestatis: Dies moritur in noctem, et tenebris usquequaque sepelitur. Funestatur mundi honor, omnis substantia denigratur. Sordent, silent, stupent cuncta; ubique justitium est, quies rerum. Ita lux amissa lugetur; et tamen rursus cum suo cultu, cum dote, cum sole, eadem et integra et tota universo orbi reviviscit, interficiens mortem suam noctem, rescindens sepulturam suam tenebras, hæres sibimet existens, donec et nox reviviscat, cum suo et illa suggestu. Redaccenduntur enim et stellarum radii, quos matutina successio extinxerat. Reducuntur et siderum absentia, quas temporalis distinctio exemerat. Redornantur, et specula lunæ quæ menstruus numerus adtriverat. Revolvuntur hyemes et æstates, et verna, et autumnus, cum suis viribus, moribus, fructibus. Quippe etiam terræ de cælo disciplina est, arbores vestire post spolio, flores denuò colorare, herbas rursus imponere, exhibere eadem quæ absumpta sunt semina; nec prius exhibere quàm absumpta: Mira ratio: De fraudatrice servatrix: Ut reddat, intercipit: Ut custodiat, perdit: Ut integret, vitiat: Ut etiam ampliet, prius decoquit. Siquidem uberiora et cultiora restituit quàm exterminavit. Reverà fœnore interitu, et injuria usura, et lucro damno: Semel dixerim universa conditio recidiva est. Quodcunque conveneris, fuit: Quodcunque amiseris, nihil non iterum est. Omnia in statum redeunt, quum abscesserint; Omnia incipiunt, quum desierint. Ideo finiuntur, ut fiant. Nihil deperit, nisi in salutem. Totus igitur hic ordo revolubilis rerum, testatio est resurrectionis mortuorum. Operibus eam præscripsit Deus antè, quàm literis: Viribus prædicavit antè, quàm vocibus. Præmisit tibi naturam magistram, submissurus et prophetiam quò faciliùs credas prophetiæ, discipulus naturæ: Quò statim admittas, quum nudieris, quod ubique jam videris: Nec dubites Deum carnis etiam resuscitorem, quem omnium noris restituorem. Et utique si omnia hominum resurgunt, cui procurata sunt, porro non homini, nisi et carni, quale est ut ipsa deperat in totum, propter quam et cui nihil deperit? Et Vid. Ejusd. Apologet. cap. xlviii. in which he proves the resurrection of the body from the possibility of that being restored to a former being, with the same ease with which it was made out of nothing; and shows how God has impressed upon this world many testimonies of the resurrection; and then he adds, Lux quomòdò interfecta resplendet, et tenebræ, pari vice decedendo succedunt, sidera defuncta vivescunt, tempora, ubi finiuntur, incipiunt, fructus consummantur, et redeunt. Certè semina non nisi corrupta et dissoluta fœcundius surgunt, omnia pereundo servantur, omnia de interitu reformantur. Tu homo tantum nomen, si intelligas te, vel de titulo Pythiæ discens, dominus omnium morientium et resurgentium, ad hoc morieris, ut pereas?

man, the lord of all these things, which thus die and revive for him, should be detained in death, as never to live again? Is it imaginable that God should thus restore all things to man, and not restore man to himself? If there were no other consideration but of the principles of human nature, of the liberty and remunerability of human actions, and of the natural revolutions and resurrections of other creatures, it were abundantly sufficient to render the resurrection of our bodies highly probable."

Examination of Objections against the Resurrection.

We shall now consider some objections which are generally brought against the doctrine of the resurrection. Some things, indeed, are objected against it, which are so vain and trifling, that they do not deserve an answer. The followers of Aristotle, for example, assert that it is impossible for a thing which is totally destroyed, to be restored to that condition in which it was before.^c And some have been so foolish as to think that those nations who burnt their dead bodies, put an eternal bar in the way of their resurrection; since the particles being so changed and separated by fire as they are, can never return again to their former bodies; or that those bodies which have been swallowed up by the ocean, so that the particles of which they consisted have been dissolved by water, and every one of them separated from the other, can never be again restored to their former situation. Such objections as these, I say, do not deserve an answer; because they consider the resurrection as if it were to be brought about in the same way in which effects are produced by second causes, according to the common course of nature, without any regard to the almighty power of God, which can easily surmount all the difficulties which, they pretend, lie in the way of the resurrection. There are other objections, taken from a perverse sense of some texts of scripture, without considering the drift and design of these, or what is added in some following words, which sufficiently overthrows the objection. Thus some produce as an objection that scripture in which it is said, 'That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; all go unto one place, and all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'^d This text we formerly noticed as brought against the immortality of the soul; and it is also alleged against the resurrection of the body, by those who conclude that the body shall be no more raised from the dead than the bodies of brute creatures. But this is rather a cavil or a sophism, than a just way of reasoning; inasmuch as the following words plainly intimate that men and beasts are compared together only as to their mortality, not as to what respects their condition after death; so that it is no sufficient argument to overthrow the doctrine of the resurrection. These and similar objections are so trifling that we shall not insist on them. There are, however, three or four that we shall lay down, and consider what answers may be given to them.

1. It is objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that, though the power of God can do all things possible to be done, yet the raising of the dead, at least in some particular instances, is impossible, from the nature of the thing; so that we may say, without any reflection cast on the divine Omnipotency, that God cannot raise them, at least not so that every one shall have his own body restored to him. Thus there are some instances of cannibals, or men-eaters, who devour one another, by which means the flesh of one man is turned into the flesh of another. In those instances also which are more common, the bodies of men, being turned into dust, produce food, like other parts of the earth, for brute creatures, and some of the particles of which they consisted are changed into the flesh of these creatures, and these again are eaten by men; so that the particles of one human body, after having undergone several changes, become a part of another. There cannot, therefore, say the objectors, be a distinct resurrection of every one of those bodies that have lived in all the ages of the world.

But it cannot be proved that, in those instances mentioned in the objection, when

^c This is what they generally intend by that aphorism, 'A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus.'

^d Eccl. iii. 19, 20, 21.

one man preys upon another, or when brute creatures live upon grass produced by the ground made fertile by the bodies of men turned to corruption, and, it may be, containing some of the particles of these bodies,—it cannot, I say, be proved that, in these instances, the particles of the bodies of men are turned into nourishment, and so become a part of human flesh; since providence did not design them to be for food. If so, then it is not true in fact, that the particles of one human body become a part of another. But, suppose it were otherwise, and suppose the objection to have as much weight as possible, we may farther observe that it is but a very small part of what is eaten which is turned into flesh; so that those particles of one human body which by this means are supposed to pass into another, make up but a very inconsiderable part of the latter. Hence, if some few particles of one human body in the resurrection are restored again to that body to which they at first belonged, the doctrine of the resurrection of the same body will not be overthrown. If the body of a man lose a few ounces of its weight, no one supposes that it is not the same body. So when the bodies of men are raised from the dead, if the far greater part of the particles of them are re-collected and united together, they may truly be said to constitute the same body. The facts alleged in the objection, therefore, do not overthrow the resurrection of the same body from the nature of the thing.

2. It is farther objected, especially against the possibility of the resurrection of the same body which was once alive in this world, that the bodies of men, while they live, are subject to such alterations that it can hardly be said that we are the same when we are men as when we were children. The expenditure of those particles which are insensibly lost by perspiration, and the daily gaining of others by nutrition, make such an alteration in the contexture of the body, that, as some suppose, in the space of about seven years, almost all the particles of the body are changed, some lost and others regained. Now, if it be supposed that the same body we once had shall be raised, it is hard to determine whether those particles of which it consisted when we were young, shall be gathered together in the resurrection, or the particles of the emaciated or enfeebled body which was laid down in the grave.

We are obliged to take notice of such objections as these, because they are often alleged in a cavilling way, against the doctrine of the resurrection. The answer that I would give to this, is, that the more solid and substantial parts of the body, such as the skin, bones, cartilages, veins, arteries, nerves, fibres, that compose the muscles, with the ligaments and tendons, are not subject to the change which is mentioned in the objection, by evaporation or perspiration, which more especially respects the fluids, and not the solids of the body. These remain the same in men as they were in children, excepting what respects their strength and size. Now, if the body, as consisting of these and some of the particles which it has lost, which the wisdom of God thinks fit to re-collect, be gathered together in the resurrection; we may truly say that the same body which once lived, notwithstanding the change made in the fluids of it, is raised from the dead. [See Note R, p. 269.]

3. There is another objection which is sometimes brought against the doctrine of the resurrection of the just, especially against their being raised with the same body which they once had. This objection is founded on the supposed inconsistency of their resurrection with their living in the other world, called heaven; which is generally distinguished from the earth, as being a more pure, subtile, and ethereal region, and therefore not fit to be an habitation for bodies compounded of such gross matter as ours are, which are adapted to the state and world in which they now live. To suppose them placed in heaven, say the objectors, is inconsistent with the nature of gravity; so that we may as well conclude a body which naturally tends to the earth as its centre, to be capable of living in the air, at a distance from the surface of the earth, as we may conclude that it is possible for such a body to live in heaven. They hence argue, that the bodies of men, at the resurrection, must be changed so as to become ethereal; and by advancing this position, they in effect overthrow the doctrine of the resurrection, as respecting, at least, the restoring of the bodies of men to the same form which once they had.—Moreover, this objection is improved by another supposition, which gave the Socinians occasion to assert that the same body shall not be raised, namely, that if the bodies of

men should be the same as they are now, they would be rendered incapable of that state of immortality which is in heaven. They argue, as was formerly observed, that because man's body at first was to be supported by food, breathe in proper air, and be protected from dissolution only by being guarded against things which might tend to destroy its temperament, man would have been liable to mortality, though he had not sinned, or in other words, death was then the consequence of nature; and from the same premises they conclude that, at the resurrection, we must not have such bodies as we now have, but ethereal. To give countenance to this opinion, they refer to the apostle's words, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;'^e and to his speaking of 'celestial bodies' as distinguished from 'terrestrial,'^f and of the body being raised 'a spiritual body.'^g They generally refer also to a scripture in which our Saviour speaks of believers, in the resurrection, being 'as the angels of God;'^h which they understand as signifying at least that their motion will no more be hindered by the weight of the body, than the motion of an angel is; so that their bodies must be of another kind than what we suppose they shall be in the resurrection.

Now, as to the inconsistency of bodies like ours living in the upper world, as being contrary to the nature of gravitation, it may be answered that, according to the generally received opinion of modern philosophers, gravity arises from an external pressure made upon bodies which are said to be heavy or light, according to their force. Hence, those bodies which are in the upper regions, above the atmosphere, are equally adapted to ascend or descend,—a fact which sufficiently answers that part of the objection. A learned writer takes notice of it;ⁱ and if it be not acquiesced in, he advances another hypothesis; which, because it has something of wit and spirit in it, I shall take leave to mention, though I must suspend my judgment concerning it, as to whether it be true or false. He says that perhaps our heaven will be nothing else but an heaven upon earth; and that it seems more natural to suppose that, since we have solid and material bodies, we shall be placed as we are in this life, in some solid and material orb. This supposition he thinks agreeable to the apostle Peter's words, when he speaks of 'a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;'^k whence he concludes, that either this world shall be fitted to be the seat of the blessed, or some other which has a solid basis like it. To give countenance to this opinion, he refers to some ancient writers. He particularly tells us, that Maximus speaks of it as the opinion of many in his time; and that Epiphanius brings in Methodius in the third century as asserting the same thing.—As to that part of the objection, that bodies like those we have now are unmeet for the heavenly state, inasmuch as they cannot be supported without food and other conveniences of nature, which tend to the preservation of life in this world; it may be answered, that it is not necessary to suppose that the body shall be raised with such qualities that it will stand in need of food, rest, or other conveniences of nature, which at present tend to the support of life. The apostle seems to assert the contrary when he says, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.'^l There is certainly a medium between asserting, with some, that we shall be raised with an ethereal body, in all respects unlike that which we have at present; and maintaining, that we shall have such bodies as are liable to the imperfections of the present state, and supported in the same way in which they now are. As to what the apostle says concerning 'flesh and blood not inheriting the kingdom of heaven,' he does not mean that our bodies shall be so changed that they shall in no respect consist of flesh and blood. And when he speaks of 'celestial' and 'spiritual' bodies, it is not necessary for us to suppose that he intends aerial or ethereal bodies. But this will be more particularly considered under a following Head, when we speak of the circumstances in which the bodies of believers shall be raised from the dead. As to the scripture in which glorified believers are said to be 'as the angels of God in heaven,' it respects their being immortal and incorruptible, or, as the context seems to intimate, that they need not marriage to perpetuate their generations in that world. We have no

e 1 Cor. xv. 50.

f Ver. 40.

g Ver. 44.

h Matt. xxii. 30.

i See Hody on the Resurrection, &c. pages 205—208.

k 2 Pet. iii. 13.

l 1 Cor. vi. 13.

occasion, therefore, to strain the sense of the words, so as to suppose that our Saviour intends, in his saying 'they shall be as angels,' that they shall cease to be like what they were when men on earth.

4. The last objection which we shall mention, is taken from the resurrection not being agreeable to the goodness of God, extended to those who are made partakers of eternal life, inasmuch as it is a bringing of them into a worse condition than the soul was in when separate from the body. This objection is generally brought by those who adopt the mode of speaking often used by Plato^m and his followers, that the body in this world, is the prison of the soul, which at death is set at liberty. They hence suppose that its being united to the body again, is no other than its being condemned to a second imprisonment; which is so far from being a favour conferred, that it rather seems to be a punishment inflicted. Others, with Celsus, reckon it a dishonour for the soul to be reunited to a body which is corrupted.ⁿ Others say that the body is a great hinderance to the soul in its actings; that it frequently inclines it to the exercise of some of those passions which tend to make men uneasy, and in consequence unhappy; and that it may in some way or other operate thus in a future state.

There is no great difficulty in answering this objection; in which there is not a due difference put between the present and the future state of believers. The only thing which might give occasion to men to conclude that their souls are imprisoned in this world, is that they are abridged of that happiness which they shall be possessed of in another; which the apostle calls 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'^o As for the reproaches which some of the greatest enemies to Christianity have cast on this doctrine, these are not sufficient to beget the least dislike of it in the minds of serious and unprejudiced Christians. What though the body be turned to corruption! It shall be raised incorruptible, and in glory; and therefore shall be a palace fit to entertain its noble inhabitant. What though it has, in this world, offered many temptations to the soul to sin, by which the latter has been sometimes overcome and exposed to passions which have defiled it, and made it very uneasy! Is this to be objected against its being raised from the dead in such a state of perfection, that it shall never more contract any guilt, or render the soul unhappy, by any inconvenience arising from it? But this will farther appear, when we speak, under a following Head, of the condition in which the body shall be raised.

The Resurrection Universal.

We proceed to consider the resurrection of the dead as universal, including all who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning of time, till Christ's second coming, excepting those who shall be found alive, on whom a change shall pass which is equivalent to a resurrection.

1. All the dead shall be raised. This is expressly mentioned in the vision of John, 'I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.'^p Here the Judge is represented as demanding the bodies of men of all ranks, conditions, and ages, out of those places where they have been lodged, with a design to reward or punish them according to their works. Now, if the justice of God is to be displayed in this solemn and awful transaction, and the bodies, as well as the souls of men, are the subjects on which judgment must pass; it follows that the resurrection will be universal. Thus our Saviour says, 'All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done

^m Vid. Plat. in Cratyl. who brings in Socrates as gravely punning on the word *σῆμα* as if it were *σημα*, 'sepulchrum;' and supposing that this name was given it to denote that the soul suffers punishment for its faults, by being detained or shut up in this prison. Seneca speaks to the same purpose: Corpus hoc, animi pondus, et pœna est, permanente illo urgetur, in vinculis est. Vid. Sen. Epist. 65.

ⁿ Vid. Orig. in Loc. supra citat.

^o Rom. viii. 21.

^p Rev. xx. 12, et seq.

evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.^q This is so evident a truth, founded on the divine perfections, as well as express words of scripture, that it is strange to find that any who allow that the dead shall be raised should deny it.

We meet, however, with several expressions in Rabbinical writers, which seem to speak of the resurrection as a peculiar privilege belonging to some but not to all. Accordingly, they have a proverbial expression, that, though the rain descends on the just and on the unjust, yet the resurrection of the dead belongs only to the just.^r This they infer from the words of the prophet Daniel, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.'^s These words contain a difficulty which most have found it an hard matter to solve agreeably to the sense of the prophet. He says, in the words immediately following, that, as the consequence of the resurrection of which he speaks, 'some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt.' Here he divides the world into two parts, and considers the one as happy, the other as miserable; so that he must, doubtless, speak of a universal resurrection. But the great difficulty lies in these words, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall arise.' Some conclude that this expression contains an exception of others who shall not arise. Thus some Jewish writers seem to have understood it. I rather think, however, that the word 'many,' there, imports nothing else but 'multitude,' that is, the whole number of those that sleep shall awake.^t It is somewhat hard to determine what the Rabbinical writers intend when they seem to confine the resurrection to the Israelites. Some of them do this in order to exclude from it, not only the wicked, but those who had not addicted themselves to the study of the law, whom they call the Gnam Haaretz. Thus they are represented in scripture as giving them but a very indifferent character, 'The people that knoweth not the law are accursed.'^u By this means they bring the number of those who shall be raised from the dead into a very narrow compass. Nevertheless they speak of future rewards and punishments in another world. Hence, some have thought that, when they exclude all but the Israelites, and, of them, all but those who were in the greatest reputation amongst them, they understand nothing else by the resurrection, but that which they fancied would happen in the days of the Messiah: in which, they suppose that some of the Jews shall be raised from the dead before the general resurrection at the last day. In this sense we may easily understand their exclusive account, when they speak of many who shall not be partakers of this privilege. But if their opinion be extended to the resurrection at the last day, I am apt to think that they intend a resurrection to eternal life. So some understand the common proverb just mentioned, as to the rain descending upon all, while the resurrection belongs only to the just, to mean that though the rain descends upon the wilderness and barren ground, yet it is only some places which are made fruitful by it, and that in the same way, though the resurrection shall be universal both of the righteous and the wicked, yet the resurrection to eternal life belongs only to the just.^x All that I shall observe at present

q John v. 28, 29.

mortuorum ad justos tantum.

r Beneficium pluvie ad omnes spectare, resurrectionem

s Dan. xii. 2.

t The words are, *רבים יקומו מן הַחַדָּשׁ*, multi ex dormientibus. Now, it is certain that *רבים*, is often translated 'a multitude,' or 'multitudes,' and signifies the same with *מון*, or the Greek word *σε πλῆθος*, as in Gen. xvii. 4: Psal. cix. 30, and in several other places. But the principal difficulty lies in the sense of the particle Mem, which is prefixed to the following word; and is generally supposed to be taken distributively. Accordingly, the sense must be, 'many,' that is, 'a great number,' or part, taken out of them 'that sleep, shall awake.' I am apt to think, however, that the prefix Mem here, is not taken distributively but denotes the following word to be in the Genitive case, as Lamed and Beth often do; and is so, the words may be rendered, 'The multitude of them that sleep shall awake;' that is, the whole number of them that sleep shall awake. The meaning is thus the same as what is mentioned by our Saviour in the text just referred to, 'all that are in their graves shall come forth,' and be disposed of in a different way, as he particularly expresses it: which contains the sense of the prophet's prediction in this place. There is a scripture, in which the word 'many' plainly signifies *σε πλῆθος*, 'the multitude,' or all mankind. The apostle speaks in Rom. v. 15, of 'many,' as 'being dead by the offence of one,' and 'by one man's disobedience many being made sinners;' which none who allow all the world to have fallen in Adam, will suppose to be taken in any other sense. See other instances of the like nature in Glass. Phil. Sacr. lib. v. Tract. i. cap. xv.

u John vii. 49.

x Vel. Por. Not. Masc. in Mimom. Part. Mos. cap. vi. who treats largely on this subject, and gives an account of the opinions of several Rabbinical writers concerning this matter; which renders it needless for me to refer to particular places.

is, that this is not altogether disagreeable to the scripture mode of speaking. For while, in some places, it asserts the resurrection of the whole world : in others, by the resurrection we are to understand nothing else but a resurrection to eternal life. Thus the apostle Paul, when he speaks of his 'attaining unto the resurrection of the dead,'^y intends his obtaining a glorious resurrection. Our Saviour also, when speaking concerning the happiness of the saints in another world, says that they shall be 'counted worthy,' or meet, 'to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.'^z So that whatever is said by Jewish writers, tending to limit to some particular persons the resurrection of the dead to eternal life, it does not appear but that even they held, in other respects, a general resurrection, both of the just and the unjust : which is as demonstrable as is the resurrection in general.

2. They who are found alive at Christ's second coming, shall undergo a change which, though it cannot be called a resurrection, will be equivalent to it. The apostle Paul gives an account of this, as what was before unknown to the church : 'Behold I show you a mystery ; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.'^a Elsewhere, also, he speaks of them when thus changed, as 'caught up in the clouds, together with' saints that are raised from the dead, 'to meet the Lord in the air.'^b This change is no less an effect of almighty power than a resurrection : for hereby their bodies, though never separated from their souls, are brought into the same state as the bodies of others shall be when reunited to them, and are rendered incorruptible and immortal, as the bodies of all other saints shall be, and made partakers of the same glory with which they are said to be raised. We have an emblem of the change in Christ's transfiguration, when there was such a change made for the present on his body, that his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. There was, moreover, not only a resemblance, but a kind of specimen of it, in the translation of Enoch and Elijah, whose bodies were formerly liable to corruption and all the other infirmities which attend the present life, but were made, in a moment, celestial and glorious. The body of our Saviour, also, though raised from the dead incorruptible and immortal, yet, during the space of forty days, while he continued on earth, was not made so glorious as it was immediately after the cloud received him into heaven ; when it underwent such a change as was agreeable to the place and state into which he then entered. Even so the bodies of the saints, at last, shall, by this change, be made meet for heaven, and shall be received with other saints into it.

The condition in which the Body shall be raised.

We shall now consider the condition in which the body shall be raised.

1. We shall notice first the circumstances of honour and glory which respect more especially the resurrection of the just. The apostle describes them as 'raised in glory.'^c The same body, indeed, is raised which lived on earth. Its identity he illustrates by 'a grain of wheat' springing up, and changed into a full grown ear. Though this is greatly improved, and very much altered from what it was when cast into the ground, yet 'every seed,' as he observes, 'has its own body.'^d We may hence infer that the same body shall be raised from the dead, though with very different qualities. There are, in the account he gives of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, several things mentioned by the apostle which some have attempted to explain in a way which is hardly consistent with a resurrection of the same body. The Socinians generally maintain that the body shall be altogether new, as to its substance, as well as its qualities. Others speak of it as an aerial body : supposing that the gross and heavy matter of which it formerly consisted, is not adapted to an heavenly state, and would render it not altogether free from a liability to corruption. This opinion a late writer mentions as having been espoused by some of the Fathers, and he speaks very favourably of it. Inasmuch as the apostle calls it 'a spiritual body,'^e and seems to distinguish it from 'flesh and

y Phil. iii. 11.

c 1 Cor. xv. 43.

z Luke xx. 35.

d Ver. 38.

a 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

e Ver. 44.

b 1 Thess. iv. 17.

blood,' which 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God;'^f he thinks that, though the same flesh and blood may rise from the grave, it will then or afterwards, receive such a change as will render it spiritual and incorruptible, that so, perhaps, when it comes to heaven, it will not be flesh and blood; or, that it will be clothed with such an heavenly body as will keep it from a possibility of corruption. Accordingly, he supposes that the apostle is to be understood as saying, that flesh and blood unchanged and unclothed with its heavenly body, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; that the body with which it shall be invested, will be thin, aerial, spiritual, bright, and shining; and that, in that respect, it may be called celestial.^g The reason he assigns why 'flesh and blood,' namely, such as is subject to corruption here, 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God,' is that the flesh may be cut and divided, and the blood let out, which would subject it to corruption. Hence, he argues, it must be changed, and 'put on incorruption.'

This account of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, seems, indeed, to be a medium between the two extremes, of those who suppose that the body shall differ but little from what it was while on earth, and of those who conclude it to be nothing else but an aerial body; yet it takes several things for granted which I cannot readily concede. What he farther adds on this subject, however, is undeniably true, namely, that the body, which before was subject to filth and deformity, is raised in glory and splendour, 'shining like the sun.'^h That which was once 'vile,' is 'fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body,'ⁱ and freed from all defect or deformity of its members, and from any dishonourable parts, not subject to weakness by labour, decays by age, to impotency and wasting by diseases, but nimble, strong, active, and that without intermission or molestation, grief, pain, or lassitude. It is raised a spiritual body, possessed and acted by the Holy Spirit; and advanced so far to the perfection of spirits as to be free from grossness, ponderosity, from needing rest, sleep, or sustenance; and is fitted for a spiritual and celestial state, in which our bodies shall wholly serve our spirits, and depend upon them, and therefore may be styled spiritual. If we stop here, without giving too much scope to wit and fancy, in advancing things too high for us, and confess that we know not, or at least know but little, the affairs of an unseen world, or 'what we shall be,'^k we say enough to give us occasion to conclude that it is a glorious and desirable state, and the change wrought is such as fully answers our most raised expectations, and is agreeable to a state of perfect blessedness. Thus concerning the condition or circumstances in which the saints shall be raised.

There is one thing which must not wholly be passed over, which is farther observed in this Answer, namely, that the bodies of the just shall be raised by the Spirit of Christ. This the apostle expressly states: 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'^l The bodies of believers, which were in this world the temple of the Holy Ghost, and were under his divine influence while living, shall not cease to be the objects of his care when dead; and as an instance of his regard to them, as well as denoting the subserviency of them to their attaining that complete redemption which Christ has purchased for them, the Spirit, in a peculiar manner, demonstrates his personal glory in raising them from the dead. Others, on the other hand, are said to be raised only by the power of Christ.

2. We shall now consider the circumstances in which the wicked shall be raised, namely, in dishonour, or, as the prophet Daniel expresses it, 'to shame and everlasting contempt.' Some marks of dishonour shall doubtless be impressed on their bodies. They shall be raised with all those natural blemishes and deformities which rendered them the object of contempt. That part which the body bore in

^f 1 Cor. xv. 50.

^g Vid. Whitby in 1 Cor. xv. 44, 50. If by the bright and shining body which this author speaks of, he means that it shall be invested with some rays of glory in the heavenly state, as many others suppose, I think, none will deny his position, since it agrees well with what the apostle says concerning the body's being made like to Christ's glorious body, and also with what the prophet Daniel says, chap. xii. 2, concerning their 'shining as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars;' or, as our Saviour says, Matt. xiii. 43, 'They shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

^h Matt. xiii. 43.

ⁱ Phil. iii. 21.

^k 1 John iii. 2.

^l 1 Rom. viii. 11.

tempting the soul to sin, shall tend to its everlasting reproach; and when reunited to it, those habits of sin which were contracted shall incurably remain, as well as the tormenting sense of guilt consequent upon them; so that the body shall be exposed to the wrath of God for ever. The resurrection of the bodies of the wicked, therefore, which renders them immortal, brings upon them endless misery. Moreover, it is said to be brought about by Christ, as an offended Judge; and as the consequence of it, they are summoned to his tribunal that he may render to every one according to his works. We are thus led to consider Christ as coming to judge the world; which is that solemn transaction that will immediately follow after the resurrection.

[NOTE R. *The Identity of the Human Body.*—The objections against the doctrine of the resurrection, from the same particles belonging to different bodies, and the same body undergoing great changes as to its constituent particles, are merely a play upon the somewhat subtle subject of physical identity, and scarcely deserve a very serious reply. The decompositions, recombinations, and numerous transmutations capable of being performed in a process of chemical experiment, would silence an argument an hundred times stronger than the strongest which can be based on the principle of the sceptic's reasoning respecting the resurrection, and, if he chose to maintain that principle, would involve him, in the face of demonstrable facts, in inextricable difficulty and self-contradiction. Astounding as the analyzing and transmuting processes of chemistry are, even they can throw little light on the question of identity as to the particles or constituent parts of any one compound, organized, animated substance. How monstrous, then, is it, in defiance not only of that science but of all the knowledge which man has ever yet attained, to pronounce peremptorily, as the sceptics presume to do, on what does or on what does not affect the identity of an organized body! Let them look at a matter incomparably simpler—let them consider so seemingly obvious, so apparently very definable an object as a river; and, according to their reasonings, either there can be no rivers in the world, or there is no identity whatever in any one of them, and no conceivable distinctiveness between ocean, cloud, and stream. All the respective particles of water which flow on any given day in any one river, have flowed before and may flow again in scores or hundreds of other streams, and have existed before, and will exist again, as portions both of the great deep and of the vapours of the sky. Nor may a sceptic escape by saying, that the channel, and not the water, constitutes the river; for he may remember that some rivers have materially or almost entirely altered their course, and still remain the same, and he will easily see, too, that a channel, apart from water, is only a hollow stripe of earth, possessing as little the character of a river as that of a Roman road.

But a better illustration of physical identity occurs in the history of the butterfly. How few, how very few, if any, of the original particles of the incipient caterpillar remain in the body of the winged insect! Not only, in its growth from the larva state to that of the full-formed caterpillar, in its transition thence to that of a chrysalis, and in its transition again to that of the butterfly, does it experience both a loss and an accession of particles surprisingly great, but it undergoes wondrous changes in organization, and eventually exists in a condition affording hardly one trace of resemblance to that which belonged to it at the commencement of its being. Yet he who should doubt or question its identity, would be compelled to adopt principles of reasoning and practise rebuttings of testimony and observation, which would upset belief in all identity and in all physical realities whatever.

The identity of organized or mutable bodies, then, would seem to consist, not in the sameness of their particles, but in their relative position to some connecting or concomitant substance. Any given river of to-day is the same which it was centuries ago, simply by its consisting of waters which have their source in certain highlands and pursue their course through a certain valley; an insect in a butterfly state is the same being which existed as a caterpillar, simply because successive changes in its organization and in its loss and accession of particles have occurred in connexion with one animating principle or animal life; an oak of the forest is identical with the acorn whence it sprang, or a cornstalk of the field, with its fifty or fourscore ears of corn, is identical with the seed whence it vegetated, simply because its continuous succession of particles, in its transition from a seminal to a matured state, occurred in connexion with the same vegetable properties, or with the substratum or organic peculiarity which constitutes the distinctiveness or specific nature of the plant. Now, where, with these facts and thousands of similar ones before us, is the difficulty of conceiving the perfect identity of the incorruptible body of the resurrection, with the corruptible body which is consigned to the grave? Suppose the loss and accession of particles while the body is in life to be ever so extensive and frequent, and suppose any amount of the aggregate particles to belong successively to different bodies, we have only to see a continuous succession or connecting chain of particles between the body of the present life and the body of the resurrection,—or at most to see this succession in connexion with the distinctive peculiarity of a human body and in relation to the animating soul—in order to recognise, in an emphatic sense of the phrase, a perfect identity. The particles, be their history what it may, which constitute the body of a man an hundred years old, occupy just the same relation to the rational soul which animates them, as the particles which preceded them; and they have been acquired through a process of consecutiveness, and in an uniformity of relationship, in strict though intermediate identity with the particles which constituted his body when he was born. His possessing now, or his having possessed before, particles which once belonged to other bodies, or his having at various periods of his life thrown off particles which other bodies have already incorporated, do not, in the remotest degree, impair the perfect identity of his present body with his body when an infant. How, then, or by what laws, can his bodily

identity be affected by the comparatively fewer changes which shall take place between the putrefaction of his body and its resurrection? Changes such as are made the ground of the sceptic's objections take place chiefly while the body is animated on earth; loss and accession and constant alteration of particles occur in the processes of animated existence; even participation of particles which have belonged to other bodies, or throwing off particles which other bodies incorporate, occurs, in most cases, far more in the multitudinous and bulky changes of the body's life and activities, than in the summary and unique events of its dissolving into corruption; so that if doubts and difficulties are to be raised as to either the possibility or the fact of identity, they may be directed much more efficiently against the identity of the body of the sexagenarian with the body of the infant, than against the identity of the body of the resurrection with the body which is committed to the dust. Man's original body is, in all its particles, derived through the medium of the body of his mother; and, so long as he is a suckling, it derives all its accessions of particles by milk drawn from her paps. In the animal food which he afterwards eats, he incorporates the directly constituent particles of the bodies of brutes; and in the vegetable on which he feeds, and even the water which he drinks and the air which he inhales, he almost, certainly, during his life, receives into his body minute but accumulating particles which once belonged to other human bodies. Yet numerous and great and constant as are the transmutations of his body, both in the accessions which it receives from other bodies, and in its exudations or losses of particles which other bodies in their turn incorporate, neither these bodies nor his own are, in the remotest degree, affected in their identity. How, then, can transmutations of a similar kind, but in the aggregate neither so great nor so direct, after the body is consigned to the grave, have any destructive or modifying effect? If the body of the resurrection but be consecutively connected with the body of the sepulchre, and occupy relationship or union to the same animating soul, it will possess just the constituents of identity with it, which the body of the living man advanced in years possesses with the body of the same man when he was a suckling. These constituents will, without a doubt, exist, and can assuredly be as little marred or hindered by the transmutations of the grave as by the transmutations of animated existence.

It is clear, then, that the identity of a body, at any two stages or in any two states of its being, does not depend on the sameness of its particles. If, however, a certain amount of sameness of particles should be contended for as necessary to its identity, we can easily show that this sameness is more certain in the abstract, and may, in most cases, embrace a larger amount of particles, between the body of the resurrection and the body of the sepulchre, than between the body of advanced age and the body of infancy. If the allegations of some philosophers be correct, that, while the fluids and unguous parts of an animated body are very rapidly changed, even the hardest particles of the bones are renewed in the course of seven years, the body of any adult has ceased to possess even one particle which belonged to the body of the same person when an infant; but even if such allegations be exaggerated, and if the most compact and durable parts of the body be of comparatively long continuance, still the body of a sexagenarian cannot be proved, and with difficulty can even be conceived, to retain any of the particles which belonged to it when he hung upon his mother's breast. Suppose, however, the body at death to be disposed of in any imaginable way,—suppose it to be interred in some spot of earth, where it mingles with the surrounding dust,—suppose it to be reduced to ashes, and either gathered into an urn, or scattered on the winds of heaven,—or suppose it to be devoured by a monster of the sea or of the land, and its flesh reduced to dust in common with the monster's body, while its bones are left to moulder away on the spot where the devourer made his horrid repast,—in either of these cases the departed soul will have left behind it a specific and considerable amount of the particles which actually constituted its body at death, and, by the power of God collecting the particles together and reconstructing them into organic form, it may be reunited to them in the day of the resurrection. While the soul of a man, when he is sixty years of age, is united to a body probably containing not one particle which belonged to it when he was an infant, it may most certainly, at the resurrection, be united to a body containing many of the very particles which belonged to it when he resigned it at death. Regard the question of physical identity, therefore, as we will, sceptics are bound either to deny the identity of the very bodies they themselves at present possess, and so to deny the identity of all organized and mutable substances whatever, or to admit the very obvious demonstrableness of the identity of the body which shall be raised in immortality with the body which is entombed in corruption.—ED.]

THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

QUESTION LXXXVIII. *What shall immediately follow after the resurrection?*

ANSWER. Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men, the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus Christ having finished the work which he undertook to perform, in gathering in his elect, and bringing that grace which he wrought in them to perfection; the only thing then remaining to be done, will be his receiving them into his immediate presence to behold his glory, and his banishing others for ever from him, with marks of infamy and detestation. In order to this, he will raise the dead,

and give a summons to the whole world of angels and men, to appear before his tribunal in that day in which he is appointed by the Father to judge the world in righteousness. This is the subject insisted on in the present Answer. In discussing it, we shall observe the following method. First, we shall prove that there shall be a day of judgment. Secondly, we shall consider the person, the character, and the solemn appearance of the great Judge to whom this work is committed. Thirdly, we shall consider the persons to be judged,—angels and men. Fourthly, we shall consider the manner in which he shall proceed in judging them. Lastly, we shall state some circumstances concerning the place where, and the time when, this great and awful work shall be performed.

Proofs of the Final Judgment.

We are here to prove that there shall be a day of judgment. This is as evident a truth as that there is a providence, or that God is the governor of the world. Every intelligent creature, being the subject of moral government, affords an argument for the proof of this doctrine. We must consider intelligent creatures as under a law which God has given as that by which they are to be governed. Hence arises our obligation to duty, and our being rendered accountable to the great Lawgiver, as to our obedience to or violation of his law. Now, God is obliged in honour to make a scrutiny into or take an account of our behaviour, that it may be known whether we have obeyed him or rebelled against him. This is evident from the concern which the glory of his own perfections has in calling us to account, and from the promises and threatenings annexed to his law, which he is obliged to fulfil or execute. It follows, then, that God will display his glory as the Judge of the world.

The fact that there will be a final judgment, is plainly revealed in scripture. It was foretold in the early ages of the world, as contained in the prophecy of Enoch, recorded in the epistle of Jude, ‘Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’^m Though these words might have a peculiar reference to the judgment which God would execute in the destruction of the old world; yet it is plain from the application made of them by the apostle, that they look as far as the final judgment, which shall be in the end of time. The same truth appears likewise from what is said in Eccl. xii. 14, ‘God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.’ There are, indeed, many displays of God’s judicial hand in the present dispensations of his providence; as he is said to be ‘known by the judgment which he executeth.’ⁿ The visible tokens of his regard to his saints in this world, as well as the public and dreadful display of his vengeance poured forth upon his enemies, proclaim his glory as God, the Judge of all. But as sin deserves greater punishments than what are inflicted here; as the promises which God has made for the encouragement of his people, give them occasion to look beyond the present scene of affairs; and especially as the divine dealings with men, as to outward things, cannot so clearly be accounted for while we behold the righteous oppressed, and many of the wicked having, as it were, more than heart can wish; we must evidently conclude that there is a time coming when matters will be adjusted, and when, as the psalmist says, ‘a man shall say,’ or every one shall have occasion to say, ‘Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.’^o

Moreover, this doctrine is not only revealed in scripture, but is impressed on the consciences of men. Though they take never so much pains to extinguish their apprehension or dread of it, it is impossible for them to succeed. That secret remorse or terror which sinners feel within their own breasts, which makes them restless and uneasy, especially when they perceive themselves to stand on the confines of another world, is an undeniable argument that there is a future judg-

^m Jude 14, 15.

ⁿ Psal. ix. 16.

^o Psal. lviii. 11.

ment. What was it that made Belshazzar's countenance to change? Why did his 'thoughts trouble him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another,' when he saw 'the hand-writing on the wall,' in the midst of all his mirth and jollity?^p Was he afraid of the united forces of the Persians and Medes, who at the time invested the capital city in which he was? Did he know that he should be slain 'before the morning?' These things were most remote from his thoughts; for he apprehended himself safe from any danger which might arise from that quarter. Was he afraid of punishment from men? His condition in the world set him above the dread of any such event. It was only the sense he had of a future judgment from God, that produced these effects in him. It was this too which made the heathen governor 'tremble,' when the apostle 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.'^q And when Paul was disputing with the Athenians, though they mocked and treated what he said about the resurrection with ridicule, yet none of them had any thing to object against the doctrine that 'God would judge the world in righteousness.'^r

It may be observed, that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as the result of a sentence passed on men after death, is so often mentioned by heathen writers, that it is evident they either received it by tradition, or understood it by the light of nature. When they enter into particular explanations of it, indeed, we meet with little but what is fabulous and trifling. Some of them suppose the rewards and punishments to be in other bodies, agreeably to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Others speak of fictitious lakes and rivers in the other world, where men are doomed to abide, at least, for some time. They knew nothing, however, respecting the day of judgment, or the appearance of the whole world before Christ's tribunal; for this is a matter of pure revelation.^s

The Person and Appearance of the Judge.

We are now to consider the person, character, and solemn appearance of the great Judge to whom this work is more especially committed. This is a doctrine which can be known in no other way than by divine revelation. The light of nature, indeed, discovers to us that God shall judge the world; but something more than this may be learned from scripture, as well as those circumstances of glory with which the work shall be performed.

1. We read that the person who is to perform this great work, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Of him it is said, he shall 'judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom';^t and elsewhere, 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.'^u If we consider his glory as a divine person, he is fit to engage in it. For as he knows all things, he can judge the secrets of men, which no mere creature can do; and as he has all the other perfections of the divine nature, he can display and glorify them, in such a way as is necessary, in determining the final estate of men, and rewarding every one according to his work. We may observe also, that this work is a branch of his mediatorial dignity, and is included in the

p Dan. v. 6.

q Acts xxiv. 25.

r Chap. xvii. 31.

s We often read in heathen writers, of Æacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, as appointed to pass a judgment on every one at death, fix them in their respective places of residence, and determine their rewards and punishments. These are generally supposed to have lived about Moses' time, and are commended for the exercise of justice, and for making laws, some of which they are supposed to have received from heaven; and as the reward of their conduct, they are said to have had the honour of being judges of men at death, conferred upon them. Some have been ready to conclude that the account which the heathen give of these three famous lawgivers and judges is nothing else but a corruption of a tradition which they had received concerning Moses, the great lawgiver to the Israelites, set forth by different names, with several things fabulous added. They who have a mind to see a very learned and critical disquisition on this subject, may consult Huet *Demonst. Evang. Prop.* iv. § 9—13. As for the variety of punishments which these judges inflicted, the lakes and rivers of fire to which they condemn the guilty, see Plato's account of them, transcribed by Eusebius, in *Præp. Evan.* lib. xi. cap. xxxviii. Eusebius thinks that some things mentioned by Plato bear a resemblance to the punishment of sin which we read of in scripture; and these things he supposes he received by tradition, from some who were acquainted with divine revelation, as he did many other things which he speaks of in his writings.

t 2 Tim. iv. 1.

u 2 Cor. v. 10.

execution of his kingly office. That he should perform it was contained in the commission which he received of the Father. Thus it is said, 'The Father judgeth no man,'^x that is, not in a visible manner, or by any delegated power which he is invested with, 'but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.'^y We may add, that it is a part of the work which was incumbent on him in the application of redemption; which cannot be said to be brought to the utmost perfection, till the day of judgment. Thus, when he speaks concerning his 'coming in a cloud with power and great glory;' he bids his people then 'lift up their heads, inasmuch as their redemption draweth nigh.'^z We might also add, that it was very expedient that he should judge the world, since he was unjustly judged and condemned by the world. The cause must have a second hearing, that his enemies, at whose bar he once stood, may be fully convinced, to their eternal confusion, that he was not the person whom they took him to be, and that he did not deserve the treatment and rude insults which he met with from them, when he stood at their tribunal. They asked him the question, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' And he replied, 'I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'^a Here he applied to himself what the prophet Daniel said concerning him;^b and thus intimated that his coming to judge the world would be the most visible and incontestable proof of his mediatorial glory, with which he was invested as the Son of man. The high priest, on hearing his answer, rent his clothes, apprehending that he spake blasphemy; after which they all condemned him to be guilty of death. It is expedient, therefore, that this visible proof of his Sonship and mediatorial glory should be given, and that he should perform this great work which was incumbent on him, as he gave them to expect. It is his 'coming with clouds, that every eye shall see,' which shall oblige 'them which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth,' who set themselves against him, 'to wail because of him.'^c Moreover, it was necessary that he should judge the world, in order that he might publicly vindicate his people, who have been judged and condemned by the world for his sake; and that his cause and interest, which have been trampled on by them, might be defended in the most public and glorious manner so as to afford an everlasting conviction that he whom men despised, whose glory was set light by, whose gospel was rejected and persecuted, is a person worthy of universal honour and esteem. Thus concerning the person who is appointed to judge the world, and the character in which he shall do it.

2. We are now led to consider the solemnity of his appearance when engaging in the work. The work being the most glorious which ever was performed since the world was created, and the honour redounding to Christ as the result of it, being the last and highest degree of his state of exaltation; it cannot but be supposed that he will appear with those ensigns of majesty and regal dignity which become his character as the Judge of quick and dead. Accordingly we have an account of his 'appearing in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.'^d 'His own glory' respects the rays of his divinity shining forth; whereby it will appear that he has a natural right to summon the whole world before him. This cannot but strike a terror into his enemies, and enhance the joy and triumph of his friends, and excite the adoration which is due to so glorious a person. His appearing in 'his Father's glory,' denotes that this is the highest display of his mediatorial dignity; the reward of his having perfectly fulfilled the commission given him by the Father, and fully answered the end for which he became incarnate. And his appearing in 'the glory of his holy angels,' implies the reverence and homage which they will pay to him, into whose hands they are given as ministering spirits to fulfil his pleasure, and who always rejoice in the advancement of his kingdom. The angels shall not indeed be employed in raising the dead, for that is a work too great for finite power; but we read of their ministry as subservient to the glory of this solemnity, as consisting in their appearing with Christ as his retinue. So it is said that he shall 'come in his glory, and all the holy angels

x John v. 22.

b Dan. vii. 13.

11.

y Ver. 27.

c Rev. i. 7.

z Luke xxi. 27, 28.

d Luke ix. 26.

2 M

a Mark xiv. 61—64.

with him.'^e These indeed make up his train ; but do not convey to him the least branch of that glory or character he is invested with. It is their honour to attend him, whose servants they are. Their work is to praise and adore him, and to show their readiness to fulfil his pleasure, without desiring to usurp the least branch of his glory. The first thing they are represented as doing, is their attending his coming with a shout, or their transmitting to the whole world the word of command first given forth by Christ, whereby all men shall be summoned to appear before him. This shall doubtless be attended with universal joy and triumph expressed by them. As to its being said that Christ shall 'come with the sound of a trumpet,'^f either the expression is to be considered as an allusion to the custom of calling the hosts together, which was done by the sound of a trumpet ;^g or we may understand it in a literal sense to denote some sound like that of a trumpet, which shall be heard throughout the world, and which shall have a tendency to excite the joy and triumph of the saints, and to strike terror into the wicked. Now, as this trumpet gives an alarm to all to appear before Christ's tribunal ; the angels are represented as assisting in bringing them thither. It is by them that the saints 'which remain alive, shall be caught up' with others 'in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ;'^h and it is said they shall 'gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other.'ⁱ Elsewhere, our Saviour, speaking of 'the end of the world,' which he calls 'the harvest,' represents the angels as 'reapers ;'^k and he explains his meaning to be, that 'at the end of the world the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.'^l This plainly intimates that they are to gather the elect together. Inasmuch, too, as there must be a separation between the righteous and the wicked, so that the one shall be set at Christ's right hand, the other at his left ; it is more than probable that this shall be done by the ministry of angels.^m And then the Judge is represented as 'sitting on his throne.'ⁿ This is called elsewhere 'a judgment-seat,' agreeably to his character as a judge ; and it is here styled his throne, as expressive of the majesty and royal dignity with which he shall perform this great work.

The Persons Judged.

We are now led to consider the persons who are to be judged. These are said to be angels and men, that is, all who are summoned to appear before Christ's tribunal. Whether the holy angels are included in the number of those whom Christ will judge, it is not safe for us to pretend to determine, since scripture is silent on the subject. That they are the subjects of moral government is evident, because they are intelligent creatures ; and it follows that as such they are accountable to God for their behaviour. It is also certain that they are employed by our Saviour in 'fulfilling his pleasure ;' and in connection with their being thus employed, they are 'sent forth by him to minister to the heirs of salvation.'^o On this account it may not be reckoned foreign to the work of the day, for Christ to give a public testimony to their faithfulness in the discharge of every work which has been committed to them ; especially as the saints who, in some respects, may be said to have been their charge and care, have received no small advantage from the good offices which they have performed for them by Christ's appointment. More than this, however, I think cannot be determined, with respect to their being judged by Christ. Many conclude, therefore, that, properly speaking, they are not included in the number of those who shall be judged by him ; either because they are represented as attending him when he comes to judgment, and are never spoken of

^e Matt. xxv. 31.

^f 1 Thess. iv. 16.

^g Numb. x. 2, &c. See Quest. lvi.

^h 1 Thess. iv. 17.

ⁱ Matt. xxiv. 31. This is the most common sense of these words. They are supposed by some, indeed, to be taken in a figurative sense, for the preaching of the gospel throughout the world after the destruction of the Jewish state ; which they think is principally intended by what is mentioned in the foregoing verses. Most conclude, however, that several things in this account of Christ's glorious appearance, are not without some allusion, at least, to what shall be more eminently accomplished, when he shall come to judgment.

^k Matt. xiii. 39.

^l Verse 49.

^m Matt. xxv. 32.

ⁿ Verse 31.

^o Heb. i. 14.

as standing before his tribunal as persons whose cause is to be tried by him; or because they are considered, as having been long before confirmed in holiness and happiness, as beholding the face of God in heaven, and consequently not to be dealt with as those who are to undergo a farther scrutiny in order to their having a new sentence passed upon them.

As to the fallen angels, they are to be brought as criminals before Christ's tribunal, in order to his passing a righteous sentence upon them. Whether the charge of their apostasy from God shall be again renewed, and sin traced to the very first spring and fountain of it, we know not. But all the guilt which they have contracted since they were, by a former sentence, cast out of heaven, shall be laid to their charge. All that they have done against the interest of God in the world, begun in the seduction of our first parents, and continued ever since, with all those methods of revenge and subtilty whereby they have opposed the kingdom of Christ in the world, and endeavoured to ruin his people, will be alleged against them, as well as the bold attempt they made on him in his own person, whilst he was in his state of humiliation. Accordingly, the fallen angels, though represented as cast down to hell, are yet said to be 'delivered into chains of darkness, and reserved unto judgment.'^p This they are at present apprehensive of, and are accordingly said 'to tremble'^q at the forethoughts of it. That they shall be judged at the last day may be inferred also from what they said to our Saviour, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?'^r Moreover, as the result of the final judgment, it is said that 'the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,'^s that is, adjudged to endure a greater degree of torment in proportion to the increase of his guilt.

But what is more particularly insisted on in scripture, and what we are immediately concerned in, is that men shall be judged by Christ. That they shall be so is set forth in universal terms. The apostle says, 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'^t Men of all ranks and conditions must appear there, 'small and great,'^u 'quick and dead,'^x that is, those who died before or shall be found alive at his coming, 'the righteous and the wicked,'^y and among these, not only those who have lived under the gospel dispensation, but others who have had no other light but that of nature, as it is said, 'As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.'^z We have no account in scripture, indeed, of the last class being adjudged to eternal life, for their doing by nature some things that are contained in the law. To suppose this, is to be wise above what is written. Indeed, it seems contradictory to those scriptures which assert the necessity of faith in Christ to salvation. But this class are generally described as suffering punishment proportioned to their works. Thus we read of 'the men of Nineveh,'^a 'the queen of the south,'^b 'the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon,'^c and 'those of Sodom and Gomorrah,'^d as 'appearing in judgment,' and being exposed to a less degree of punishment than those who sinned against greater light. But there is not the least intimation given of their being discharged from condemnation. Our Saviour, indeed, speaks of 'the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself to do according to it, who should be beaten with many stripes,' that is, exposed to a greater condemnation. Yet he, at the same time, intimates that 'the servant who did not know it,' that is, who sinned under greater disadvantages for want of gospel revelation, 'should be beaten with few stripes,' or adjudged to suffer a less degree of punishment.

The Pelagians, indeed, have endeavoured not only to exempt the heathen from the consequences of the final judgment; but some have insinuated that they shall not be concerned in it at all. Thus one^e supposes that the persons who are represented as appearing at Christ's tribunal,^f and sentenced by him according to their works, are only those who made a profession of the Christian religion. The principal argument which he brings to support this opinion is, that they on whom a sen-

p 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude ver. 6.

q 2 Cor. v. 10.

z Rom. ii. 12.

d Matt. xi. 24.

q James ii. 19.

u Rev. xx. 12.

a Matt. xii. 41.

e Curcellæus in Dissert. de necessit. cognit. Christ. § vi.

r Matt. viii. 29.

x 2 Tim. iv. 1.

b Ver. 42.

s Rev. xx. 10.

y Eccl. iii. 17.

c Chap. xi. 22

f Matt. xxv.

tence of condemnation is passed, are accused of not ministering to Christ's members; that this ministering is interpreted as not giving him meat when he was hungry, or drink when he was thirsty, &c.; and that this charge cannot be brought against those who never heard of Christ, or that if it could, they might excuse themselves by alleging that it was impossible for them to show respect to him whom they never knew. But though our Saviour's design here, is to aggravate the condemnation of those who sinned under the gospel, and to charge some with crimes of the highest nature; yet there is nothing mentioned to exclude others so as to give occasion to suppose that the judgment of the great day will respect those only who have sat under the sound of the gospel. We have hence ground to conclude that, as the resurrection of the dead will be universal, so all who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning to the end of time, shall be the subjects of the judicial proceedings in that solemn and awful day.

The Manner of the Judgment.

We now proceed to consider the manner in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world. It is evident that the design of this glorious transaction is to determine the final state of all men; which will be done in a public and visible manner, that it may appear that the Judge of all does right. The transaction differs very much from that particular judgment which is passed on every one at death; in which, though the state of men is unalterably determined, yet it is not done in an open and visible manner, but with a design that the cause should be tried again in that day which is appointed for it. The account we have in scripture of the manner in which this shall be done, bears some resemblance to the proceedings in human courts of judicature. The day is set in which causes are to be tried; the judge appears with the ensigns of his authority; he being seated on the tribunal, the persons to be tried appear before him; the cause is heard; and as all are to be judged according to law, the law is supposed to be known, or the particular statute which is the rule of judgment is produced, and whatever charge is brought against any one is drawn up in the form of an indictment, and supported by sufficient evidence; and the persons are then acquitted or condemned. In allusion to this process of judgment we read of Christ's appearing in a visible manner, seated on a throne of judgment; or of 'the Son of man appearing with all the holy angels with him,'—of his 'sitting upon the throne of his glory, and all nations being gathered before him'^g. —'the judgment set, and the books opened.'^h

The righteous, who are a part of those who shall stand before Christ's tribunal, shall be separated from the wicked; the former placed at his right hand, the latter at his left. With respect to the wicked, an indictment shall be brought in, in which they shall be charged with the violation of the holy law of God, with all the aggravating circumstances of their crimes, the detail of which is contained in the books which are said to be opened. This charge shall be supported by evidence; in which case men shall be witnesses against one another, so far as they have been apprized of each other's behaviour, or immediately concerned in it. It is not improbable also, that as the holy angels are conversant in this lower world, and as they are sometimes represented as being present in worshipping assemblies,ⁱ and observing the actions of men,^k that they shall appear as evidences against the wicked. It may be observed too, that the Judge himself will be a witness against the criminals; which is not usual in human courts of judicature, though it does not savour of the least injustice. Thus it is said, 'I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.'^l The divine Omniscience will put the charge out of all manner of doubt. There can be no appeal from it; for it is impossible

^g Matt. xxv. 31, 32.
^k 1 Tim. v. 21.

^h Dan. vii. 26; Rev. xx. 12.
^l Mal. iii. 5.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 10.

for God, either to be deceived himself, or to deceive others. Besides, there shall be the testimony of conscience, whereby persons shall stand self-convicted. Their 'own hearts shall condemn them,' as well as 'God, who is greater than their hearts.'^m Thus it is said that 'the consciences of men bear witness, and their thoughts, in the mean while, accuse or else excuse one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.' Accordingly, 'every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world' of the ungodly 'become guilty,'ⁿ or appear by their own confession to be so, 'before God.'^o And in order to this, there shall be a particular dispensation of providence, whereby those sins which have been long since forgotten, shall be brought to remembrance. This seems intimated in our Saviour's words in the parable: 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things,'^p &c.; and also in God's 'setting the iniquities' of sinners 'in order before their eyes';^q and this will have a greater tendency to support the charge than ten thousand witnesses.

As to the things which shall be brought into judgment, or be charged and proved, they are mentioned in a very particular manner. Thus it is said, 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'^r Elsewhere he is represented as 'executing judgment upon all, and convincing all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'^s Our Saviour particularly intimates,^t that their behaviour, under the means of grace, shall be inquired into, and that what they have done against him and his interest in the world, shall be alleged against them. But now that we are speaking concerning those matters which shall be produced in judgment against the wicked, it may be inquired whether the smallest sins committed by them shall be brought into judgment against them. This seems to be intimated by our Saviour when he says, 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.'^u From this statement some take occasion to complain of the severity of the divine dispensations, as if it were intended that persons shall be condemned to suffer eternal punishments for a vain thought. But no one will bring this as an objection against the methods of the divine proceeding in the great day, who duly considers the infinite evil of sin; or that the least sin deserves a sentence of banishment from God, as it is an affront to his sovereignty, and opposite to his holiness. Let it be considered, however, that no person in the world shall have reason to complain that he is separated from God, or rendered eternally miserable, only for a vain thought, or for a sin of infirmity, as though he had been guilty of nothing else. When our Saviour says that 'every idle word shall come into judgment,' the meaning is, that every such sin shall tend to fill up the measure of their iniquity; so that the punishments which they shall be exposed to, shall be for this, in conjunction with all other sins. Every sin brings guilt with it; and all sins taken together, smaller as well as greater, enhance the guilt. Hence our Saviour's meaning is, that every sin exposes men to a degree of condemnation, in proportion to the aggravation of it; though those sins which are of a more heinous nature, bring with them a greater degree of condemnation. Thus concerning the charge brought against the wicked.

The next thing to be considered, is the trial of the righteous, who are said to stand before Christ's judgment-seat. Here it may be observed that no indictment shall be brought against them, at least, with the Judge's approbation; for they were acquitted and discharged, when brought into a justified state; and as the consequence of their having been so, 'none,' as the apostle says, 'shall lay any thing to their charge,' since 'it is God that justifieth.'^x If any thing be alleged against them by the enemies of God, who loaded them with reproach, and laid many things to their charge in this world of which some have been just, and others unjust and malicious, the great and merciful Judge will appear as an advocate on their behalf, and will vindicate them from those charges which are ungrounded, and will farther allege, as a foundation of their discharge from the guilt of all others, that

m 1 John iii. 20. n Rom. ii. 15, 16. o Chap. iii. 19. p Luke xvi. 25. q Psal. l. 21.
r Eccl. xii. 14. s Jude 15. t Matt. xxv. 42, 43. u Chap. xii. 36. x Rom. viii. 33.

he has made a full atonement for them. Hence, when their sins are sought for, they shall not be found in judgment, or charged upon them to their shame, confusion, or condemnation; but they shall be pronounced righteous, as interested in Christ's righteousness. The great Judge shall evince that they are so, by producing those graces which were wrought in them, which are inseparably connected with their justification, though not the foundation of it, that so the method of the divine proceedings may be vindicated, and it may appear that, as 'without holiness no one shall see the Lord,' so they are holy, and accordingly possess that internal quality which denotes them to be persons whom God designed to save. This I take to be the meaning of our Saviour's address to the righteous, when he pronounces them 'blessed,' and invites them to 'come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink,'^y &c. Here the word 'for' is taken demonstratively, and not causally; and denotes that they were such as might expect to be admitted to this honour and blessedness, having those marks and characters of his children upon them to which the promise of salvation was annexed; not as though any thing done by them was the cause of their salvation. It hence appears that the graces of God's people shall be published before angels and men, to the praise of the glory of him who was the author of them.

But there is a difficult question proposed by some, namely, Whether shall the sins of God's people be published in the great day; though it is certain they shall not be alleged against them to their condemnation? This is one of the secret things which belong to God, which he has not so fully or clearly revealed to us in his word; so that we can say little more about it than what is matter of conjecture. Some have thought that the sins of the godly, though forgiven, shall be made manifest, that so the glory of that grace which has pardoned them may appear more illustrious, and their obligation to God farther enhanced. They also think that the justice of the proceedings of that day requires it; since it is presumed and known by the whole world that they were prone to sin as well as others,—that, before conversion, they were as great sinners as any,—and that, after it, their sins had a peculiar aggravation. Why, then, they ask, should not their sins be made public, as a glory due to the justice and holiness of God, as being infinitely opposite to all sin? This they farther suppose to be necessary, that the impartiality of divine justice may appear. Moreover, if God, by recording the sins of his saints in scripture, has perpetuated the knowledge of them, and if it is to their honour that the sins there mentioned were repented of, as well as forgiven, why may it not be supposed that the sins of believers shall be made known in the great day? Besides, that they shall be made known seems agreeable to those scriptures which state that every word and every action shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.—On the other hand, it is supposed by others, that though the making known of sin which is subdued and forgiven, tends to the advancement of divine grace; yet it is sufficient to answer this end, as far as God designs it shall be answered, that the sins which have been subdued and forgiven, should be known to those who committed them, who, in consequence of having received pardon, have matter of praise to God. Again, the expressions of scripture whereby forgiveness of sin is set forth, are such as seem to argue that those sins which were forgiven shall not be made manifest. Thus they are said to be 'blotted out,'^z 'covered,'^a 'subdued,' 'cast into the depths of the sea;'^b and 'remembered no more,'^c &c. Besides, Christ's being a Judge, does not divest him of the character of an Advocate, whose part is rather to conceal the crimes of those whose cause he pleads, than to divulge them. We may add, that the law which requires duty, and forbids the contrary sins, is not the rule by which they who are in Christ are to be proceeded against, for if it were, they could not stand in judgment; but they are dealt with according to the tenor of the gospel, which forgives and covers all sins. Furthermore, it is argued that the public declaring of all their sins before the whole world, notwithstanding their interest in forgiving grace, would

y Matt. xxv. 34, 35.
b Micah vii. 19.

z Isa. xliii. 25.
c Jer. xxxi. 34.

a Psal. xxxii. 1.

fill them with such shame as is hardly consistent with a state of perfect blessedness. Lastly, the principal argument insisted on, is that our Saviour, in Matt. xxv., in which he gives a particular account of the proceedings of that day, makes no mention of the sins, but only commends the graces, of his saints. Such arguments as these are alleged to prove that it is probable the sins of the saints shall not be exposed to public view in the great day. But after all that has been said, it is safest for us not to be too peremptory in determining this matter, lest, by pretending to be wise beyond what is clearly revealed in scripture, we betray our own folly and too bold presumption, or assert that which is not right of this glorious Judge. Thus concerning the method in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world.

The Place and Time of the Judgment.

We are now to consider some circumstances relating to the place where, and the time when, this great and awful work shall be performed, at least, so far as it is convenient for us to inquire into this matter, without giving too much scope to a vain curiosity, or desire to be wise above what is written.

1. As to the place, it does not seem probable that it shall be upon the surface of the earth; because we read that 'they which are' found 'alive' at Christ's coming, 'shall be caught up together with them,' that is, the others who are raised from the dead, 'in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' This statement immediately follows the account which the apostle gives of the Lord's 'descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;' ^d which is the signal to be given of the immediate appearance of the Judge. Hence, their being 'caught up in the clouds,' denotes that Christ shall judge the world, in some place above this earth; otherwise they must be supposed to be caught up thither, and afterwards obliged to descend thence to the place from which they were taken; which does not seem probable. This is all that we dare assert, concerning the place where this great and solemn transaction shall be performed.

I the rather observe this, because some are of opinion that the valley of Jehoshaphat is designed to be the place. They found this opinion on the prediction of the prophet Joel, ^e 'I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people.' ^f This, however, seems to be a prophecy of some signal victory which the church should gain over its enemies; which shall have its accomplishment before Christ comes to judgment, and be no less remarkable than that which God gave Jehoshaphat over the Moabites, Ammonites, and the inhabitants of mount Seir, mentioned in 2 Chron. xx.; on which occasion the place where it was obtained, was called 'the valley of Bera-chah,' which signifies blessing. The prophet seems, by 'the valley of Jehoshaphat,' not to point out any particular place known by that name, but rather to allude to the signification of the word, as importing the judgment of the Lord. So that nothing else is intended by it but that God shall, in the latter day, probably when those scriptures shall have had their accomplishment, which relate to the conversion of the Jews, execute some remarkable judgment against the heathen, amongst whom they were scattered. It cannot, therefore, with the least shadow of justice,

^d 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

^e Joel iii. 2.

^f Of this opinion are some amongst the Papists, and particularly Cornelius a Lapide, Vid. ejusd. Comment. in loc. who describes it as a place situated at the foot of the mount of Olives, in or near the place where our Saviour was in his agony, betrayed and delivered by Judas, into the hands of his enemies. This will be, according to him, the fittest place for Christ to execute judgment upon them, and to appear in his triumphant and glorious manner for this purpose. The same opinion is mentioned by many Jewish writers, who maintained it. Thus the author of the Chaldee Paraphrase on Canticles viii. 5, says, that the dead shall be raised, and the mountain of Olives shall be cleft, and all the dead of Israel shall come out hence; and that the just who died in the captivity, and consequently were buried in or near that place, shall come through the caverns of the earth, that they may here arise to judgment. Several Rabbinical writers adopt this chimera; which is mentioned also in both the Talmuds. And many of the modern Jews, as is observed by some late travellers into the Holy Land, are so fond of burying their dead in or near this place, that they might not have far to come under the earth, when they rise from the dead, and must appear here at the day of judgment, that they pay a certain sum of money for the privilege of burying their dead there. See Hody on the Resurrection, pages 70, 71.

be argued from this scripture, that the place called the 'valley of Jehoshaphat,' is that where all the nations of the earth shall be gathered to judgment. Besides, some have observed, that how great soever this valley may be, it is not large enough to hold the vast multitudes that shall be convened on this occasion.

2. As to the time when Christ shall judge the world, it is called, in scripture, 'a day.'^g This does not signify that the whole work shall be performed in the space of time which we generally call a day; for that space can hardly be sufficient for performing the many things which are to be done. Some have thought that the whole process shall take up no less than a thousand years; and suppose, that the apostle Peter intimates as much, when, speaking concerning the day of judgment, he says, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'^h In this sense the excellent Mr. Mede understands that scripture.ⁱ But as the idea is not more clearly explained by other scriptures, speaking to the same purpose, I dare not be too peremptory in adopting it. I would rather conclude that the time of the continuance of the last judgment is called 'a day,' as denoting a season appointed for the despatch of a work, whether it be longer or shorter. Thus Christ calls that season in which the gospel was preached to the Jews, 'their day.'^k It is the safest way for us to acknowledge this point to be a secret which belongs not to us to inquire into.

As to the time when Christ shall come to judgment, or when this glorious day shall begin, this also is considered as a matter kept secret, not only from us, but from all creatures. Thus our Saviour, speaking concerning it, says, 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.'^l This is particularly intimated in the Answer we are explaining; and the reason assigned why it is kept secret from us is, that all may watch and pray, and be ready for the coming of the Lord, which is certainly a matter of the highest importance. It is evident that if God had either revealed the time of Christ's coming to judgment, or let men know how long they should continue in this world before that judgment which is passed on all at death, the corruption of our nature might have taken occasion to put off all thoughts about it till it was at hand. Hence, our Saviour, in wisdom, as well as in kindness to his people, has represented his coming under the similitude of 'a thief in the night;'^m and accordingly says, 'Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.'ⁿ Thus concerning the day of judgment. As to the consequences of it, and the sentence which shall be pronounced on the righteous and the wicked, these shall be treated under the two following Answers.

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of the Final Judgment.

All that I shall add at present are some practical inferences from this doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment.

1. What has been observed concerning Christ's coming to judge the world in his own glory, and that of his Father, and of his holy angels, should fill us with high and honourable thoughts of him; and since the angels reckon it an honour to attend him as ministering spirits in that great day, we should be excited to an holy ambition to approve ourselves his servants in all things, and to account it our honour that he will esteem us such.

2. Since Christ, at his coming to judgment, will bring all things to light, and impartially state and try the cause of every one, who shall be rewarded according to his works; we ought to feel protected against all unbelieving thoughts which may arise in our minds, concerning the seemingly unequal distributions of providence, in God's dealing with the righteous and the wicked, as to the outward affairs

^g Acts xvii. 31.

^h 2 Pet. iii. 8.

ⁱ See his works, lib. iii. in Comment. Apocal. page 662, and his Remains, chap. xi. page 748, in which he is followed by some others. The learned Gale, in his Court of the Gentiles, Part I. book iii. chap. vii. page 78, speaks of some Jewish writers as maintaining, that the world shall continue 6000 years, and that from thence to the 7000th shall be the day of judgment. He also mentions this as an opinion which Plato had received by conversing with some of them; and concludes, that this is the great Platonic year, which is mentioned by that philosopher and his followers.

^k Luke xix. 42.

^l Matt. xxiv. 36.

^m 1 Thess. v. 2.

ⁿ Matt. xxiv. 44.

of life. We ought also to feel convinced that, though we know not his design in the various afflictive providences wherewith we are exercised, since we are not to expect those blessings here which he has reserved for his people at Christ's appearing to judgment; yet, if he is pleased to bestow them upon us hereafter, we shall then have the highest reason to admire his wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, in the whole method of his providential dealings with us.

3. This doctrine tends to reprove the atheism and profaneness of those, who make a jest of or scoff at the day of judgment; like those the apostle Peter mentions, whom he calls 'scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.'^o It also reproves those who abuse the day of God's patience; and because his coming to judgment is delayed, take occasion to commit the vilest crimes. Our Saviour speaks of some as acting thus, and intimates that he will 'come in a day when they looked not for him, and shall cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites.'^p

4. This doctrine should stir us up to universal holiness, and the greatest circumspection and diligence in the service of God. Accordingly, the apostle, when speaking concerning Christ's coming to judgment, with those displays of terrible majesty which shall attend it, says, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?'^q

5. Since we expect that Christ will judge the world at the last day, it behoves us to be often judging and trying ourselves; examining how matters stand between God and us; and whether we behave ourselves in such a way that we may be meet for Christ's coming, and have boldness in the day of judgment. As the apostle says, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,'^r that is, with the judgment of condemnation.

6. It is an inexpressible advantage when we can conclude, upon good grounds, that this great Judge is our Friend, our Saviour, our Advocate, and that, living and dying, we shall be found in him; for in that case, though he come in such a way as will strike the utmost terror and confusion into his enemies, we shall be found of him in peace; and the consequence of this day's solemnity shall be our admission into his immediate presence, and being for ever blessed in it.

FINAL PUNISHMENT.

QUESTION LXXXIX. *What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?*

ANSWER. At the day of judgment the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand: and upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful, but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them; and thereupon shall be cast out from the favourable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.

HAVING, under the last Answer, taken a view of Christ as coming to judgment, and the whole world as seated at his tribunal, the wicked on his left hand, and the righteous on his right, the books opened, the cause tried, and the evidence produced; we are now to consider the sentence which will be past on each of them, together with the consequences. In particular, we have an account in this Answer, of a sentence of condemnation, pronounced against the wicked, and the punishment inflicted on them in execution of it. This our Saviour expresses in words full of dread and horror: 'Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.'^s This includes an eternal banishment and separation from him, in whose favour there is life. As sin is the object of his detestation, it being contrary to the holiness of his nature, they who

o 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

r 1 Cor. xi. 31.

ii.

p Matt. xxiv. 48—51.

s Matt. xxv. 41, 45.

2 N

q 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.

are found in open rebellion against him shall not 'stand in his sight.'^t As they did not desire his special and gracious presence, which his saints always reckoned their chief joy, in this world, they shall be deprived of it in the next. And when they are commanded to depart from him, they are described as 'cursed,' that is, bound over to suffer all those punishments which the vindictive justice of God will inflict, and which are contained in the threatenings denounced by his law which they have violated, and to be sent down into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both in body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever. Accordingly, there are three things to be considered, relating to the punishment of sinners in another world, namely, the kind of it, its degree, and its eternal duration.

The Nature of the Punishment.

As to the kind of punishment ; it is generally considered in two respects, namely, the punishment of loss and the punishment of sense.

1. The punishment of loss includes a separation from God, the fountain of blessedness ; a being destitute of every thing which might administer comfort to them ; and, as the consequence of this, a deprivation of fellowship, not only with Christ, but with his saints. Not that they were ever the objects of their love or delight, but, on the other hand, their conversation was distasteful and burdensome, especially when it was in itself most savoury and spiritual ; yet it is reckoned to be one ingredient in their misery, as our Saviour states, when he first speaks of 'the workers of iniquity' as commanded to 'depart from him,'^u and then tells them, 'Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.' Here the happiness of others is considered as what will raise their envy, and prove a torment to them.

2. There is the punishment of sense. This is set forth by unspeakable torments to be endured both in soul and body ; and because no pain is so exquisite as that which is occasioned by fire, it is called 'unquenchable and everlasting fire.'^x As for the inquiry which some make whether the fire be elementary or material, like that which is in this world, it savours more of curiosity than what tends to real advantage. As it is called 'a fire prepared for the devil and his angels,' some have a little hesitated about this matter, concluding it impossible for material fire to affect spirits ; but I am not desirous to enter too far into this disquisition. It is, indeed, a hard matter for us to determine whether or how far a spirit is capable of the punishment of sense, any otherwise, than as, by reason of its union with the body, it has an afflictive sensation of the evils which that immediately endures. Hence, some have thought that, when we read of the fire of hell, it is to be taken in a metaphorical sense, to denote those punishments which are most exquisite and have a tendency to torment both soul and body in different respects. The soul may be tormented as the wrath of God has an immediate access to it, to make it miserable. And though this cannot be styled the punishment of sense in the same respect as that is of which the body is the more immediate subject ; yet if we understand the word 'sense' as importing an intellectual perception of those miseries which it undergoes, whereby it is made uneasy, and, in a moral sense, subject to pain, as we sometimes speak of the pain of the mind, as well as that of the body, then it may be said to endure the punishment of sense, though it is a spiritual substance.

There are various ways by which the wrath of God may have access to the soul, to make it miserable. This punishment is sometimes compared to fire, as it is beyond expression dreadful. Accordingly, God, when inflicting it, is styled, 'a consuming fire ;'^y and elsewhere 'his jealousy' is said to 'burn like fire.'^z Hence, some have described the punishment of sin in hell, as including the insupportable weight of the wrath of God lying on the consciences of men, and sinking them into perdition ; whereby it appears to be 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'^a A judicious divine considers this as the effect of God's immediate presence, as a sin-revenging Judge. He does not, therefore, understand that text in which

^t Psal. v. 5
^y Heb. xii. 29.

^u Luke xiii. 27, 28.
^z Psal. lxxix. 5.

^x Matt. iii. 12 ; Chap. xxv. 41.
^a Heb. x. 31.

it is said, 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord,'^b as denoting an exclusion from his comforting presence, which is an undoubted truth, and the more generally received sense of it, but he speaks of the presence of God, as well as his power, as the immediate cause of their destruction; just as the psalmist joins these ideas together when he says, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger?'^c This interpretation seems most agreeable to the grammatical construction of the words.^d Thus concerning that punishment which is more immediately adapted to the soul.

As for the punishment of sense which the body shall endure, whether it be compared to fire as containing some effects not unlike those produced by fire, or whether it signifies only that the punishment shall be most exquisite, as no pain is so terrible as that which is the effect of fire, I will not pretend to determine. There are, indeed, other expressions, as well as fire, by which it is set forth in scripture, namely, 'cutting asunder,'^e 'tearing in pieces,'^f 'drowning men in destruction and perdition,'^g 'a being bound hand and foot,' and 'cast into outer darkness,'^h or into 'a furnace of fire,'ⁱ or 'a lake of fire burning with brimstone.'^k Some of these are, doubtless, metaphorical expressions, by which the punishment of sin is set forth; but whether they are all so, we must not be too positive in determining. Some, however, suppose that they are, because the glory of heaven is described by the metaphors of 'streets of gold, gates of pearl,'^l 'rivers of pleasure,'^m &c., and the wrath of God is metaphorically described, when he is called 'a consuming fire.'ⁿ Now, as the glory of heaven is represented by metaphors, denoting that it is inconceivably great; so, if we suppose that the punishment of sin in hell is set forth by metaphorical ways of speaking, we cannot, from the metaphors used to describe it, take, in all respects, an estimate of its quality. Yet, from such expressions we must conclude in general that it is inexpressibly terrible, and that it respects both soul and body, and in different senses is called the punishment of sense.

The Degree of the Punishment.

We now come to consider this punishment as to its degree. This is generally described as being various, in proportion to the aggravations of sin committed. Accordingly, they who have sinned under the gospel dispensation, are considered as exposed to a greater degree of punishment than others who have not had those advantages. Thus the apostle says, 'Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?'^o Our Saviour, speaking concerning the Scribes and Pharisees, who were notorious hypocrites, and whose religion was no more than a pretence, and made subservient to the vilest practices, tells them that 'they should receive the greater damnation,'^p that is, a greater degree of punishment, as they had contracted greater guilt, than others. The apostle likewise speaks of some who had had great advantages through 'the riches of God's goodness and forbearance' towards them, but yet were 'impenitent' and hardened in sin; and these he says 'treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath,'^q that is, add greater degrees to the punishment which they shall endure in another world.

The Duration of the Punishment.

We are now to consider the punishment which sinners are liable to in the world

^b 2 Thess. i. 9.

^c Psal. xc. 11.

^d See this largely insisted on by Dr. Goodwin, in his Works, vol. iii. book xiii. His critical remark in chap. ii. seems very just, viz. that *απο* is casual here, as well as in many other scriptures which he refers to. His strongest argument to prove that it is to be taken so in this verse, is, that, as he observes, *απο* must be applied to 'the glory of his power,' as well as to 'his presence;' so that if it denotes a separation from the one, it must also denote a separation from the other; whereas no one supposes that this punishment consists in a separation from the power of God, but that it is to be considered as the effect thereof.

^e Matt. xxiv. 51.

^f Psal. l. 22.

^g 1 Tim. vi. 9.

^h Matt. xxii. 13.

ⁱ Matt. xiii. 42.

^k Rev. xix. 20.

^l Chap. xxi. 21.

^m Psal. xxxvi. 8.

ⁿ 11. b. xl. 29.

^o Chap. x. 29.

^p Matt. xxiii. 14.

^q Rom. ii. 5.

to come, as to its duration ; in which respect, it shall be without intermission, and eternal. That there shall be no relaxation of punishment, may be proved from what our Saviour says in the parable ; ‘ the rich man,’ who was tormented in flames, could not obtain ‘ one drop of water to cool his tongue.’^r Thus we read that the wicked ‘ drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation ;’ that ‘ the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever ;’ and that ‘ they have no rest day nor night.’^s Our Saviour speaks of the two main ingredients in the punishment of sin ; namely, the tormenting sense which conscience shall have of the wrath of God, due to it ; and the punishment of sense, which is compared to that which proceeds from fire ; and both are described as eternal : ‘ Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’^t

That the punishment of sin in another world will be eternal, may be argued from the impossibility of their obtaining a discharge from the sentence of condemnation under which they are, unless satisfaction be given to the justice of God for sins committed. This cannot be given by the person who suffers ; inasmuch as his sufferings are due to him in execution of the sentence of the Judge, and agreeably to the demerit of sin. The latter being, as it is usually expressed, objectively infinite, because committed against an infinite God, and containing a contempt of his sovereignty and other perfections which are infinite, deserves a punishment proportionable to it. And as the sufferings of finite creatures are no other than finite, and consequently bear no proportion to the demands of infinite justice, they must be infinite in duration, that is, eternal.—It may be observed also, that at the same time that persons are suffering for past sins, they are committing others. This is not like God’s furnace which is in Sion, by means of which he designs, not to consume, but to refine and purge away the dross and the tin ; for it cannot in any instance be said, that this is overruled for good. Hence, the habits of sin are increased rather than weakened by it ; and consequently sinners are set at a farther distance from God, from holiness and happiness ; and as their sin is still increasing, their punishment must be eternal.—We may add, that there is no Mediator appointed between God and them, none who has undertaken to pay this debt for them, and procure their discharge. Accordingly, the apostle says concerning those who have ‘ sinned wilfully, after they had received the knowledge of the truth ; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ;’^u no advocate to plead their cause ; no ordinances in which the glad tidings of salvation are published, nor any golden sceptre of mercy held forth to invite them to come in, or give them hope of finding acceptance in the sight of God ; no covenant of grace which contains any promise that will afford relief ; and no inclination in their own souls to return to God with an humble sense of sin, and desire to forsake it. Hence ‘ arises everlasting despair, beyond expression tormenting, which the apostle calls ‘ blackness of darkness for ever.’^x

This is a very awful and awakening subject. Many are as little desirous to hear of it, as the people were to hear the account which the prophet Isaiah gave them of approaching judgments ; and therefore they say, ‘ Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.’^y But as there is such a passion in men as fear, and as this is often made subservient to their spiritual advantage ; it pleases God, in wisdom and mercy, sometimes to reveal those things in his word which have a tendency to awaken our fears, and to set before us death as well as life, the threatenings as well as the promises, that we may see it to be our duty and interest to flee from the wrath to come, and to use those precautions prescribed in the gospel which may have a tendency, through divine grace, to prevent our sinking into everlasting perdition. They who cast off fear, and think themselves safe, because the rod of God is not upon them, generally cast off a sense of duty, and say unto God, ‘ Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.’^z Hence, these subjects are to be insisted on as warnings to induce men to avoid the rock on which multitudes have split and perished ; not to lead them to despair.

^r Luke xvi. 26.
^x Jude, verse 13.

^s Rev. xiv. 10, 11.
^v Isa. xxx. 11.

^t Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.
^z Job xxi. 9, 11.

^u Heb. x. 26.

How the Doctrine of Final Punishment is to be preached.

There is great need of prudence, however, in applying every truth in such a way that it may be of advantage ; which renders the work of those that are employed in preaching the gospel exceedingly difficult. Every one must have those doctrines inculcated and applied to him, which are adapted to his respective condition, as well as founded on the word of God. We therefore subjoin two remarks for direction.

1. Such subjects as those which relate to the final punishment of the wicked, though they are not to be concealed, as being a part of the counsel of God, and a means ordained by him to answer some valuable ends ; yet are not only or principally to be insisted on, as if there were no passion to be wrought upon but fear. It is the stupid person who is to be awaked out of his lethargy by violent methods. The man who says, ‘ I shall have peace, though I walk according to the corrupt inclinations of my own heart ; the danger is over ; or no ill consequences will follow the wilful impenitency and unbelief which is like to prove destructive to one ; ’ or the person who is willing to deceive himself, and endeavours to extenuate his sin, apprehending that the consequences of it will not be so pernicious as they really are, or that the mercy of God will save him though he remain in open rebellion against him, as if there were no arrows in his quiver, or vials of wrath to be poured forth on his enemies ;—these ought to be dealt with by representing God as a consuming fire, with whom is terrible majesty ; and they must be told of the punishment of sin in this and another world, that they may see their danger before it be too late to escape. If it be said that the terrors of God have a tendency to drive persons to despair, we reply that the persons we are speaking of are so far from despairing of the mercy of God, that they are inclined to abuse it ; and that that which is likely to be their ruin, is the contrary extreme, presumption, which leads them to turn the grace of God into wantonness.

2. As for others who are humbled under a sense of sin, whose flesh trembles for fear of God’s judgments, there is not so much occasion to insist on these awakening subjects, when we have to do with them ; for to do so would be like adding fuel to the fire. If the heart be broken and contrite, and is apt to meditate little else but terror ; such subjects as are encouraging are to be insisted on. Thus when the prophet Jeremiah had been reproving the people for their abominations, and threatening many sore judgments which God would execute upon them, he applied healing medicines : ‘ Is there no balm in Gilead ? is there no physician there ? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered ? ’^a Elsewhere, also, when he had been reprehending them for their idolatry, and putting them in mind of those judgments they had exposed themselves to, he encourages them to ‘ cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. Will he reserve his anger for ever ? will he keep it to the end ? ’^b God, in his usual method of dealing with sinners, first excites their fear by charging sin on the conscience, and putting them in mind of the dreadful consequences of it, in which respect, as the apostle expresses it, ‘ The law enters that the offence might abound ; ’ and then he shows them that the soul may take encouragement when humbled under a sense of its own guilt, that ‘ where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded. ’^c—The gospel is designed to administer comfort to those who are distressed under a dread of the wrath of God. Hence, there are promises as well as threatenings ; and each are to be applied as the occasion requires ; so that the happiness of heaven is to be set in opposition to the punishment of sin in hell. Accordingly, as the Answer we have been explaining contains a very awful and awakening subject ; so, in the next, we are led to consider a doctrine which is full of comfort to those who have an interest in Jesus Christ.

^a Jer. viii. 22.

Chap. iii. 4, 5.

^c Rom. v. 20.

FINAL BLESSEDNESS.

QUESTION XC. *What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment?*

ANSWER. At the day of judgment, the righteous being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted; shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven: where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery, filled with unconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity: And this is the perfect and full communion which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory at the resurrection and day of judgment.

We have, in this Answer, an account of the great honours and privileges which the saints shall be advanced to and partake of, as the consequence of that sentence which Christ will pass on them, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;'^d which are words containing a gracious invitation to them to take possession of that glory which shall tend to make them completely and for ever happy. We have already considered the righteous as caught up to Christ in the clouds. Either this is done by the ministry of angels, or else their bodies will be so changed that they shall be able to mount upward as easily as they now are to walk upon the surface of the earth. We have also considered them as set at Christ's right hand. Whether this has any regard to the place of their situation, we cannot determine; but, according to the scripture mode of speaking, it certainly denotes the highest honours conferred upon them. These will be not only spiritual but external and visible; whereby it shall appear to all, that they are Christ's peculiar friends and favourites. That they should be thus dealt with by so glorious a person, while they were in themselves unworthy of his notice, will tend to raise in them the highest astonishment, and shall afford matter of eternal praise. What is farther observed concerning them in this Answer, is contained in the following Heads. First, they shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted. Secondly, they shall join with Christ in the judging of reprobate angels and men. Thirdly, they shall be received into heaven; and there they shall be freed from sin and misery, filled with unspeakable joy, made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, and admitted into the company of saints and holy angels, and have the immediate vision and fruition of God to all eternity.

The Saints Acknowledged and Acquitted.

They shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted. Our Lord Jesus was not ashamed to own his people, when he condescended to take their nature upon him, and dwell among them; or, as the apostle expresses it, 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'^e He gives them many tokens of his approbation, by those spiritual privileges which he bestows on them here. But at last he shall own them publicly, in the presence of the whole world, as a people whom he has chosen, redeemed, and sanctified, and in whom he has brought the work of grace to perfection. He overlooks all their former failures and defects, and looks upon them as adorned with perfect beauty, appearing without spot before him, and having now nothing which may be offensive to his holy eye, or denote them unmeet for the relation which they stand in to him, and the blessings which they shall enjoy with him.

Moreover, it is said that he shall openly acquit them, that is, declare publicly that he has given satisfaction for all their offences, and that therefore they are for ever pronounced clear from the guilt of them. It is not improbable, also, as was formerly observed, that their former sins shall not be so much as mentioned, being all covered, and if sought for, shall not be found. But it is certain that if they shall be mentioned, it shall not be to their confusion or condemnation; for it shall be

declared that the justice of God has nothing to lay to their charge ; and, in consequence, they shall be delivered from that fear, shame, and distress, which they had formerly been subject to, through the afflicting sense of the guilt and prevalence of sin. When, however, they are represented as thus acquitted, we are not to suppose that their sins were not fully pardoned before, or that justification in this life is imperfect, as to what concerns their right to forgiveness or eternal life. The debt was fully cancelled, and a discharge given into Christ's hands in behalf of all his elect, on his making satisfaction to the justice of God. But this was not their visible discharge ; and not being a declared act, it could not be claimed by them, nor was it applied to them, till they believed ; and then they might say, ' Who shall lay any thing to our charge ? It is God that justifieth.' Yet their justification, as it is declared to faith, and apprehended by it, could not be said to be, in all respects, so apparent, or so attended with those comfortable fruits and effects which are the consequence of it, as it is when they are pronounced justified by Christ at death. And even then the discharge is not so open and visible to the whole world, as it shall be in the day of judgment.

The Saints Joining Christ in Judging.

It is farther said that the saints shall join with Christ in judging reprobate angels and men. This is very often asserted by those who treat on this subject ; and it seems to be founded on the sense which is commonly given of the apostle's words in 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3, ' Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world ?' and, ' Know ye not that we shall judge angels ?' We must take heed, however, if we apply that scripture to the case before us, that we do not advance anything which tends in the least to derogate from the glory of Christ, who alone is fit for, and appointed to perform, this great work. Hence, if we suppose that the apostle is here speaking concerning the judgment of the great day, the saints are said to judge the world in a less proper sense. But whatever be the sense in which we explain it, we must not think that they shall be assessors with Christ in his throne of judgment. It is one thing for them to be near his throne in the capacity and station of favourites ; and another thing for them to be in it. If they are in any sense said to judge the world, it must be understood, not as if the trying of the cause or the passing of the sentence, were committed to them, but rather of their approving what Christ shall do. This they are represented as doing, when Christ is set forth as ' judging the great whore,'^f namely, the antichristian powers. They so far join with him in doing this, that they ascribe glory and honour to him, and say, ' Righteous are his judgments.' There is another sense in which some understand this scripture concerning ' the saints judging the world,' namely, as denoting that the public mention which shall be made of the graces of the saints, their faith, repentance, love to God, and universal holiness, will have a tendency to condemn those whose conversation in this world has been the reverse of theirs. Their having forsaken all and followed Christ, and accounted all things but loss that they might win him, the choice which they have made of suffering rather than of sinning, which appears to be an instance of the highest wisdom, shall condemn the wickedness and folly of those who have exposed themselves to inevitable ruin and misery by being otherwise minded. Thus Noah is said to have ' condemned the world by his faith,'^g when, in obedience to the divine command, he ' prepared an ark to the saving of his house ;' which the world then thought to be the most preposterous action which ever was performed, though they were afterwards, to their cost, convinced of the contrary. ' The men of Nineveh,' also, and ' the queen of the south,' it is said, shall ' rise in the judgment with that generation, and condemn it,'^h that is, shall do so objectively, rather than formally ; as their respective behaviour tended to expose the impenitency and unbelief of the Jews, whom Christ there reproves. If the saints' judging the world, be understood in either of these senses, it is an undoubted truth ; but more than this I dare not assert.

We may take occasion to inquire, however, whether the text on which this doc-

^f Rev. xix. 2.

^g Heb. xi. 7.

^h Matt. xii. 41, 42.

trine is founded, may not be explained in another sense, as denoting some privilege which the saints were to enjoy in this world, when the empire should become Christian. Magistrates and judges should then be chosen out of the church; and in this respect they should 'judge the world.' This seems to me the most probable sense of the apostle's words. It is that in which an excellent and learned writer understands them;ⁱ and it is very agreeable to the context, in which believers are dissuaded from 'going to law before the unjust, and not before the saints.'^k The apostle here signifies the inexpediency of exposing those controversies, before heathen magistrates, which ought to be compromised in the church; as though the Christians thought themselves unfit to judge the smallest matters; for he speaks only of such matters, not of capital offences, which were to be tried only by the civil magistrate. Now to enforce his advice, he says, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?'

It is objected to this sense of the text, that, at the same time when 'the saints' are said to 'judge the world,' the apostle speaks of them as 'judging angels,' a work which comes not within the province of civil magistrates, though we suppose them to be Christians. But when the apostle speaks of the 'saints judging angels,' his language is brought in occasionally, the former sense of 'judging' being more agreeable to the context. Since he is insisting on an honour which should be conferred on the church, he farther enlarges on that subject, and so speaks of their 'judging angels,' as denoting that the consequence and success of the gospel would be an evident conviction to the world, that the devil's empire was weakened, and that he had no right to reign over the children of disobedience as he formerly had done. Thus our Saviour speaks of Satan's kingdom being destroyed by the preaching and success of the gospel, 'Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.'^l Elsewhere also it is said, 'Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down.'^m Moreover, the apostle may have a particular reference to their power of casting out devils, not only in that but in some following ages,—a power which our Saviour, before he left the world,ⁿ promised they should have, and which is known to have continued in the church till the third century.^o

It is farther objected that there is another scripture which seems to favour the opinion that the saints shall judge the world in the last day, namely, our Saviour's words in Matt. xix. 28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' That, it is alleged, which makes this sense more probable is what he mentions in the following verse as a reward which they who had 'forsaken all for his name's sake,' should enjoy, namely, 'Ye shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' We reply, that our Saviour, in one of these verses, may, without any strain on the sense of the words, be understood as giving his people to expect some honours which should be conferred on them here, and in the other, those which they should receive in another world. As to the honours which were to be conferred on them here, namely, their 'sitting on thrones,' &c., these are said to be enjoyed 'in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory,' that is, not when the Son of man shall come to judgment, but when he shall enter into his state of exaltation, and sit at God's right hand. 'The regeneration' seems most applicable to the gospel state; in which, as the apostle says, 'old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,'^p agreeably to what is foretold by the prophet, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth;^q' which may well be called 'the regeneration.' As for the apostles 'sitting on thrones,' this may signify the spiritual honours which should be conferred upon them; so that however they might be despised by the world, they should be reckoned, by all who entertain just notions of things, the chief and most honourable men of the earth. Their 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' may, in the same way, be understood of their convicting the Jews, and condemning them for their un-

i Vid. Wits. in Symb. Exercit. 22. Sect. 18—20.

k 1 Cor. vi. 1.

l John xii. 31.

m Rev. xii. 10.

n Mark xvi. 17.

o See vol. ii. p. 25.

p 2 Cor. v. 17.

q Isa. lxv. 17.

belief in crucifying Christ, and rejecting and persecuting the gospel. This they might be said to do, partly in the exercise of their ministry, and partly in the success of it. Indeed, the gospel may be said to judge men when it convicts and re-proves them. If this be the sense of the text, then it does not respect any honours which the apostles should be advanced to in the day of judgment; and consequently it does not give any countenance to the opinion that they, any more than other saints, shall bear a part in judging the world, either of angels or men.

The Saints Blessed in Heaven.

The saints shall be received into heaven. This includes their being brought into a glorious place and state. The apostle calls this place, ‘an house not made with hands;’^r which, doubtless, far excels all the other parts of the creation. For, as the earthly paradise far excelled all other places in this world, being planted immediately by God, and furnished with every thing which might be delightful and entertaining for man, for whom it was designed; so must this place be supposed to be the most glorious part of the frame of nature, being designed to be the place of the eternal abode of the best of creatures. Indeed, whatever is called heaven in scripture, comes short of it, this being styled, ‘The heaven of heavens.’^s It is also particularly described as ‘God’s throne;’^t the place of his immediate residence, where he displays his glory in an extraordinary manner. As for that particular part of the universe in which it is situated, it is neither possible nor of any advantage for us to determine, any otherwise than as it is described, as being above this lower world. The principal thing to be considered, is the glory of the state into which the saints shall there be brought. This is set forth in this Answer, by a variety of expressions.

1. The saints shall be fully, and for ever, freed from all sin and misery. These being inseparably connected, they are delivered from both at once. As to deliverance from the guilt of sin, it includes not only their being for ever discharged from the guilt of past sins, which is involved in their being openly acquitted, but their not contracting guilt for the future. Accordingly, they are put into such a state that they shall be disposed and enabled to yield sinless obedience; and as they are presented without spot and blemish before God, they shall never contract the least defilement, or do any thing which shall render them unmeet for that glory to which they are advanced, afford matter of reproach to them, or provoke God to cast them out of that place which cannot entertain any but sinless creatures. Their state, therefore, differs not only from that sinless state in which man was created at first, but from that in which the angels were created, who were not all confirmed in their state of holiness, so as to render it impossible for any of them to fall. But a state of confirmed holiness is the happiness of glorified saints. We may infer also that there shall be no temptations to sin; none arising from themselves, since there are no lusts or remains of corruption to draw them aside from God; and no temptations from others, since they are all made perfectly holy. The soul meets with no temptations from the body, as it often did, while it was subject to the infirmities of nature in this imperfect state. It shall never be liable to any weakness, weariness, stupidity, or any of those diseases with which it is now oppressed; so that the soul shall never meet with any temptations arising thence, inasmuch as the happiness of the body consists in its subserviency to it, in all those things which may tend to promote its complete blessedness.

Moreover, the saints are considered as delivered from all misery, whether personal or relative. The afflictions of believers are confined to the present state. In heaven ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.’^u Nothing remains which may tend to abate their happiness, or render the state in which they are imperfect.

2. They shall be filled with inconceivable joys. Thus our Saviour says to the man in the parable, who had improved the talents he had been intrusted with,

^r 2 Cor. v. 1.

^s Psal. cxlviii. 4.

^t Isa. lxvi. 1.

^u Rev. xxi. 4.

‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’^x They are said to be ‘presented,’ not only ‘faultless before the presence of the glory of Christ,’ but ‘with exceeding joy.’^y This is the necessary result of a state of perfect blessedness; which cannot but administer the highest satisfaction and comfort to those who are possessed of it; inasmuch as it not only answers, but even exceeds, their most raised expectations. These joys are not indeed carnal, but spiritual; for, as the greatest delight which the saints have here, consists in the favour and love of God, and in the bright rays of his glory shining into the soul, so they shall be perfectly blessed with this delight hereafter, and in respect to it their joy shall be full.

3. They shall be made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and in soul. The soul shall be unspeakably more enlarged than it was before, as to all its powers and faculties. The understanding shall be rendered more capable of contemplating the divine perfections; and it shall be entertained with those discoveries of the glory of these perfections, which at present we have but a very imperfect knowledge of. It shall be fitted to behold the wisdom of God in the works of creation and redemption, and be led into the deep mysteries of his providence, and the reason of those various dispensations of it, which, though they know not now, they shall know hereafter. The will shall be perfectly free, having no corrupt nature to bias it or turn it aside from that which is its chief good and happiness; nor shall it choose any thing but what is conducive to that end. There will be no remains of rebellion and obstinacy, but a perfect and entire conformity to the will of God. The affections shall be perfectly regulated, and shall unalterably run in a right channel, fixed upon the best objects, and not in the least inclined to deviate from them. As for the body, it shall be fitted for a state of perfection, as well as the soul; for it shall be raised a spiritual, celestial, and glorious body, and therefore perfectly adapted to be a partaker with the soul of that glory which the whole man shall be possessed of, and sanctified to be a temple of the Holy Ghost for ever.

4. They shall be joined with the innumerable company of the saints and holy angels. The apostle speaks of ‘an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born,’^z to which we are said in this world, to ‘come’ by faith; but hereafter these two assemblies shall be joined together, and make one body, that they may, with one consent, ‘adore’ and proclaim ‘the worthiness, riches, wisdom, and strength of the Lamb that was slain, who lives for ever and ever.’^a

As the saints and angels are described as making up the same body, and engaged in the same worship, some have taken occasion to inquire concerning the means by which they shall converse together in another world, or in what manner this united body shall be made visible to each other. These things, however, we must be content to be ignorant of in this present state. Yet as to the saints, they shall converse with one another by the organs of sense and speech; for that they may do so is one of the ends for which the body shall be raised and reunited to the soul; and it may be proved also, from the fact that Moses and Elias conversed with Christ at his transfiguration in such a manner.^b Some propose the question relating to this matter, Whether shall there be a diversity of languages in heaven, as there is on earth? But this we cannot pretend to determine. Some think that there shall; that as persons of all nations and tongues shall make up that blessed society, so they shall praise God in the same language which they used when on earth; and that in order to this worship being performed with the greatest harmony, and to mutual edification, all the saints shall, by the immediate power and providence of God, be able to understand and make use of every one of those different languages as well as their own. This opinion they found on the apostle’s words, ‘That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.’ The worship of Christ here described, they suppose to have respect to the heavenly state, because it is said to be done both by ‘those that are in heaven, and those that are on earth.’^c But though the apostle speaks, by a metonymy, of different tongues, that is, persons who speak different languages, being

^x Matt. xxv. 21, 23.
^a Rev. v. 11, et seq.

^y Jude, ver. 24.
^b Matt. xvii. 3.

^z Heb. xii. 22, 23.
^c Phil. ii. 10, 11.

subject to Christ, he probably means by the expression persons of different nations, whether they shall praise him in their own language in heaven or not. Accordingly, some conjecture, that the diversity of languages shall then cease; because it took its rise from God's judicial hand, when he confounded the speech of those who presumptuously attempted to build the city and tower of Babel, and because it has been ever since attended with many inconveniences. Indeed, the apostle seems expressly to intimate as much, when speaking concerning the heavenly state, he says, that 'tongues shall cease,'^d that is, the present variety of languages. Moreover, as the gift of tongues was bestowed on the apostles, for the gathering and building up of the church in the first age, and as it ceased to be bestowed when this end was answered; so it is probable, that, in like manner, the diversity of languages shall hereafter cease. I am aware that there are some who object that the saints' understanding all languages, will be an addition to their honour, glory, and happiness. But we may answer, that though it is indeed an accomplishment in this world for a person to understand several languages, its being so arises from the subserviency of it to those valuable ends which are answered by it. But all necessity for it, and consequently all such subserviency, would be entirely removed, if the diversity of languages be taken away in heaven, as some suppose it will.

There are some, who, it may be, give too much scope to a vain curiosity on this subject: they pretend to inquire what this language shall be, and determine, as the Jews and some of the fathers do, that it shall be the Hebrew. Their arguments for this opinion are not sufficiently conclusive; and are principally these;—that Hebrew was the language with which God inspired man in paradise, and that which the saints and patriarchs spake, and the church generally made use of in all ages, till our Saviour's time; that it was this language which he himself spake while on earth; that since his ascension into heaven, he spake to Paul in the Hebrew tongue;^e and that when the inhabitants of heaven are described in Revelation as praising God, there is one word used, by which their praise is expressed, namely, 'Hallelujah,' which is Hebrew, the meaning of which is, 'Praise ye the Lord.' But these arguments are not sufficiently convincing; so that we must reckon the opinion which they are brought to support no more than a conjecture.

Others suppose that the language spoken in heaven will not be any particular language which is or has been spoken in this world, but one more perfect and significative; and that this language is what the apostle means when he speaks of 'the tongue of angels.'^f Now, though it is more than probable that there shall be some language more perfect and significative than any now known in the world, which glorified saints shall receive by immediate inspiration; yet that there will be such does not fully appear to be the apostle's meaning in the scripture referred to. For it is not certain that angels express their ideas by the sound of words; inasmuch as they have no bodies, nor organs of speech, nor can we certainly determine that they frame voices some other way. 'The tongue of angels,' which the apostle speaks of, is an hyperbolical expression, signifying the most excellent language, or such an one as angels would speak, did they use a voice; just as 'the face of angels'^g signifies the most bright, glorious, and majestic countenance; and as manna is called 'angel's food,'^h that is, the most pleasant and delightful. But these things, though often inquired into by those who treat on this subject, are very uncertain; nor is it of any advantage for us to be able to determine them.

But there is another thing arising from the consideration of the saints being joined in one society, which is much more useful, and, so far as we have light to determine it, will afford a very comfortable and delightful thought to us, namely, what concerns their knowing one another in heaven. The scripture, indeed, does not so fully determine this matter as it does some others relating to the heavenly state; yet many of God's children have died with a firm persuasion that they shall see and know their friends, in another world, and have been ready to conclude such knowledge to be a part of that happiness which they shall enjoy there. Nor can we think this altogether an ungrounded opinion; though it is not to be contended for as if it were a necessary and important article of faith. The arguments which

d 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

e Acts xxvi. 14.

f 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

g Acts vi. 15.

h Psal. lxxviii. 25.

are generally brought in defence of it, are taken from those instances recorded in scripture in which persons who have never seen one another before, have immediately known each other in this world, by a special, immediate, divine revelation, given to them. Adam in this manner knew that Eve was taken out of him, and therefore said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.'ⁱ He was 'cast into a deep sleep, when God took one of his ribs, and so formed the woman,' as we read in the foregoing words; yet the knowledge of the event was communicated to him by God.—Moreover, we read that Peter, James, and John, knew Moses and Elias;^k as appears from Peter's making a particular mention of them, 'Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,'^l though he had never seen them before.—Again, our Saviour, in the parable, represents 'the rich man' as 'seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom';^m and speaks of him as addressing his discourse to him. From such arguments some think it may be inferred that the saints shall know one another in heaven, when joined together in the same assembly.—Again, some think that this may be proved from the apostle's words, in 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20, 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.' This language seems to argue that he apprehended their happiness in heaven should contribute or be an addition to his, as he was made an instrument to bring them thither. Even so, by a parity of reason, every one who has been instrumental in the conversion and building up of others in their holy faith, as the apostle Paul was with respect to them, may expect that these shall tend to enhance his praise, and give him occasion to glorify God on their behalf. It follows, then, that the redeemed shall know one another; and that they who have walked together in the ways of God, and have been useful to one another as relations and intimate friends, in what respects more especially their spiritual concerns, shall bless God for the mutual advantages which they have received.—Further, some prove this from that expression of our Saviour, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.'ⁿ If by these 'everlasting habitations' be meant heaven, as many suppose; then the meaning is, that they whom you have relieved and shown kindness to in this world, shall express a particular joy upon your being admitted into heaven; and consequently they shall know you, and bless God for your having been so useful and beneficial to them.

It is objected that, if the saints shall know one another in heaven, they shall know that several of those who were their intimate friends here on earth, whom they loved with a very great affection, are not there; and that their knowing this will have a tendency to give them some uneasiness, and be a diminution of their joy and happiness. But if it be allowed that the saints shall know that some whom they loved on earth are not in heaven, they will not experience uneasiness; for the affection which took its rise principally from the relation which we stood in to persons on earth, or the intimacy which we have contracted with them, will cease in another world, or rather run in another channel, and be excited by superior motives, namely, their relation to Christ, that perfect holiness which they are adorned with, their being joined in one blessed society and engaged in one employment, and the remembrance of their former usefulness one to another, in promoting their spiritual welfare, as made subservient to the happiness they now enjoy. As for others who are excluded from their society, they will think themselves obliged out of a due regard to the justice and holiness of God, to acquiesce in his righteous judgments. Thus the inhabitants of heaven are represented as adoring the divine perfections, when the vials of God's wrath were poured out upon his enemies, and saying, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus. True and righteous are thy judgments.'^o

5. Another ingredient in the glory of heaven, which is, indeed, the greatest of all, is the saints' enjoying the immediate vision and fruition of God. This vision

i Gen. ii. 23.

m Luke xvi. 23.

k Matt. xxii.

n Ver. 9.

l Ver. 4.

o Rev. xvi. 5, 7.

includes something more than their beholding the human nature of Christ, as Job speaks, when he says, 'In my flesh shall I see God.'^p This, indeed, will be a delightful object, not only by reason of the glory of it, but from the love which they bear to his person who, in that nature, procured for them the happiness which they are advanced to. But the principal thing contained in this vision of God, is that it is contemplative and intellectual; for, in other respects, he is invisible. Yet, there are two ways by which persons are said to see him. The one is by faith, adapted to our present state. Thus Moses is said to have 'seen him who is invisible,'^q that is, to contemplate, adore, and improve the glory of the divine perfections, so far as he is pleased to manifest it to us in this world. But the other way of beholding him is more perfect, as his glory is displayed with the greatest clearness and in the highest degree in heaven. This the apostle opposes to that vision which we have of God by faith, when he says that in heaven 'we shall see face to face, and know even as we are also known;'^r that is, we shall have more bright and immediate discoveries of the glory of God. This, when represented by the metaphor of 'seeing face to face,' has some allusion to our knowing persons when we are in their immediate presence, which far exceeds that knowledge which we had of them by report, when at a distance from them. This immediate knowledge of God the apostle expresses by a mode of speaking which cannot well be understood in this imperfect state, when he says, 'We shall see him as he is.'^s It differs from those views which the saints have sometimes had of the glory of God, when manifested in an emblematical way in this world. Saints in heaven behold that glory as shining forth in its greatest effulgency. Moreover, as the apostle speaks of this as a privilege which should be enjoyed by the saints at the appearing of Christ, who seems to be the object more especially here intended, it may denote their beholding his mediatorial glory in its highest advancement. Now, the view which they have of it, is said to be assimilating, as well as delightful. Hence, the apostle adds, 'We shall be like him.' It shall also be satisfying. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will,' or shall 'behold thy face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.'^t How vastly does this differ from the brightest views which the saints have of the glory of God here! It is true they know something of him as he manifests himself in the works of creation and grace. But their knowledge of him as thus manifested is very imperfect. The object is not presented in its brightest lustre; nor is the soul, which is the recipient of it, enlarged, as it shall then be, to take in the rays of divine glory. Though, however, this vision of God shall be unspeakable, so that much more shall be known of his perfections than we can attain to in this life; yet the saints shall not have a comprehensive view of it; for that is not consistent with the idea of them as finite creatures. Thus concerning the immediate vision of God.

It is farther observed that this vision is attended with fruition; and therefore it is not merely speculative or contemplative, but such as is felicitating. Accordingly, the saints know their interest in God, and see themselves to be the happy objects of the former and present displays of the glory of his perfections, and how these have all been exerted in bringing them to this blessed state, and fixing them in it; and hence arises that joy which accompanies this vision of God. Besides, there are some impressions of his glory on their souls, which not only occasion but excite this joy.—Again, it is observed that this fruition is of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is beheld and enjoyed, as his glory shines forth in the face of Christ, as bestowing on his saints all the blessings which he has promised in that everlasting covenant which was established with and in Christ, as their Head and Saviour; his purposes of grace, and all his promises having had their full accomplishment in him. The glory of Christ is beheld as the person to whom the whole work of redemption, together with the application of it, was committed, and by whom it is now brought to perfection. The Holy Ghost is beheld as the person who has, by his power, rendered every thing which was designed by the Father, and purchased by the Son, effectual to answer the end which is now attained, by shedding abroad the love of the Father and Son in

their hearts, dwelling in them as his temple, and beginning, carrying on, and perfecting that work which is so glorious in its effects and consequences. In these respects the saints have perfect and distinct communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which far exceeds all they can have here, and is infinitely preferable to all the delight which arises from that enjoyment which they have of the blessed society of perfect creatures to whom they are joined.

6. The last ingredient in the happiness which believers shall enjoy in heaven is, that it shall be to all eternity. As the soul is immortal, and the body to which it shall be united shall be raised incorruptible; so the inheritance which is reserved in heaven for the saints, is such as 'fadeth not away.'^u This will tend to make their happiness complete; which nothing could do were there not a full assurance of its everlasting duration. It would be a continual alloy to it, and a very uncomfortable thought, to conclude that, though their enjoyments are very great, they shall have an end. The glory of heaven is not like the glories of this present world, which are but for a moment, and, as it were, perish in the using; nor like the state of holiness and happiness in which God created man at first, which, through the mutability of his nature, it was possible for him to lose. But it is established by the decree of God, founded on the virtue of the blood of Christ, who purchased for his people eternal redemption, and in the covenant of grace settled this inheritance upon them, as an everlasting possession. This is a doctrine so universally acknowledged, that it is needless to insist on the proof of it; and it is so frequently mentioned in scripture, that we scarcely ever read of the glory of heaven, but it is described as 'eternal.'^x

There is one thing more which, though it is not particularly mentioned in this Answer, I would not entirely pass over, that is, what may be said to a question proposed by some, Whether there are degrees of glory in heaven? The Papists not only maintain that there are, but pretend that greater degrees of glory shall be conferred on persons, in proportion to the merit of their good works here on earth. They, accordingly, have assigned the highest places there, to those who have performed works of supererogation, by doing more than was strictly enjoined them by the law of God. But all Protestant divines, who allow that there are degrees of glory in heaven, strenuously maintain that these are rewards of grace, as every ingredient in the heavenly blessedness is supposed to be. When this doctrine is made the subject of controversy, neither side ought to contend for their particular opinion, as if it were one of the most important articles of faith,^y or charge those who defend the other side of the question with maintaining something directly contrary to scripture or of a pernicious consequence. They who suppose that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, are afraid that, if they should assert the contrary, it would in some measure eclipse the glory of the grace of God, and give too much countenance to the popish doctrine of the merit of good works. But this all Protestant divines, as was just observed, sufficiently guard against.—Again, it is argued against degrees of glory, that those external and relative privileges which the saints enjoy, such as election, justification, and adoption, belong equally and alike to all, and that the same price of redemption was paid for all, so that their glory shall be equal. But this reasoning will not appear very conclusive, if we consider that sanctification is as much the result of their being elected, justified, redeemed, and adopted, as their being glorified. Yet sanctification appears not to be equal in all; and it hence does not follow that their glory in a future state shall be so. Besides, though their objective blessedness, which consists in that infinite fulness of grace which there is in God, is inconsistent with any idea of degrees; yet it does not follow that the communications resulting from it, which are finite, shall be in a like degree.—Nor can it be inferred, that if there are degrees of glory, the state of those who have the least degree shall be imperfect in its kind, or have anything in

^u 1 Pet. i. 4; chap. v. 4.

^x See Jude verses 6 and 21; Matt. xxv. 46; Tit. i. 2; Rom. vi. 22; Gal. vi. 8; 1 Tim. i. 16; Psal. xvi. 11.

^y [Dr. Ridgeley evidently means here the doctrine of degrees of glory, altogether apart from the question as to these degrees being 'rewards of grace.' From the whole tenor of his sentiments he clearly regards the affirmative of this question—supposing the doctrine of degrees to be admitted—as not open to a moment's doubt among true Christians.—Ed.]

it which shall afford the least abatement of their happiness, or be the occasion of envy or uneasiness, as the superior excellencies of some, in this imperfect state, often appear to be; for any such result would be inconsistent with perfect holiness. Nor is it to be supposed that there are any degrees with respect to the deliverance of the saints from the sins, guilt, and miseries of this present life; for this deliverance is equal in all. Nor do they who think that there are degrees of glory in heaven, in the least insinuate that every one shall not be perfectly filled and satisfied, in proportion to his receptive disposition. As a small vessel, put into the ocean, is as full, in proportion to its capacity, as the largest; so none of the saints will desire, nor indeed can contain, more than God designs to communicate to them.—In defence of the opinion that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, reference is sometimes made to the parable of the persons who were hired to work in ‘the vineyard.’^z There it is said that ‘they that were hired about the eleventh hour, received every man a penny;’ which is as much as others received who were hired early in the morning, and had ‘borne the heat and burden of the day.’ But this does not sufficiently prove the opinion; for some of these labourers are represented as ‘murmuring,’ and insinuating that they had wrong done them; and Christ replies to them, ‘Is thine eye evil because I am good?’ and they are described as ‘called,’ but ‘not chosen.’^a The parable, therefore, is designed to set forth, not the glory of heaven, but the temper and disposition of the Jewish church, who were partakers of the external blessings of the covenant of grace, and to show that they and the gospel-church had equal privileges.

The arguments, then, which are generally insisted on to prove that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, can hardly be reckoned sufficient to overthrow the contrary doctrine; especially if those other scriptures which are often brought to prove that there are, be understood in their most obvious sense. One of these is Daniel xii. 3, ‘They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.’ Here the prophet speaks of those who excel in grace and usefulness in this world; and then considers them, not only as ‘wise,’ but as ‘turning many to righteousness;’ whose glory, after the resurrection, of which he speaks in the foregoing verse, has in it something illustrious and distinguishing, which is compared to ‘the brightness of the firmament’ and ‘stars.’ It is objected, however, that our Saviour^b illustrates the happiness of all the glorified saints, whom he calls ‘the righteous,’ by their ‘shining as the sun;’ that therefore the prophet Daniel means no other glory but what is common to all saints; and that consequently there are no degrees of glory. We reply, that our Saviour does not compare the glory of one of the saints in heaven, with that of another; but intimates that the happiness of every one of them shall be inconceivably great, and very fitly illustrates it by ‘the brightness of the sun.’ The prophet, on the other hand, is speaking of some who were honoured above others in their usefulness here; and then considers them as having peculiar degrees of glory conferred upon them hereafter. This is something more than what he refers to in the foregoing verse, which is common to all the saints, when he speaks of them as ‘awaking out of the dust to everlasting life.’

Another scripture brought to prove this doctrine, is 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42, ‘There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead.’ Here the apostle is speaking concerning the happiness of the saints after the resurrection. He does not compare them with what they were when they left the world, for then they had no glory, being ‘sown in corruption and dishonour;’ but he seems to compare the glory of one saint, after the resurrection, with that of another. Accordingly, he illustrates it by the brightness of the heavenly luminaries; every one of which has a glory superior to terrestrial bodies. Yet he seems to intimate, that if we compare them together, the glory of the one exceeds that of the other. Thus the glory of the least saint in heaven is inconceivably greater than that of the greatest on earth. The glory, indeed, is full and complete in its kind; yet when compared with the glory of others, it may in some circumstances fall short of it.

z Matt. xx. 9.

a Verses 15, 16.

b Chap. xiii. 43.

Another argument brought by some to prove this doctrine is taken from the parable of the talents.^c There the reward is proportioned to the respective improvement of the talents by those who received them; and it seems to have reference to some blessings which they were to receive in another world. Our Saviour compares himself to one who 'travels into a far country,' and after a long time, returns and reckons with his servants. Now, by the former is meant his ascension into heaven, and by the latter his return to judgment; so that the rewards spoken of which differ in degree, must respect some peculiar glory which he will confer on his people in another world. Indeed, the whole chapter seems to refer to the same thing. The preceding parable of the wise and foolish virgins denotes the behaviour of persons here, and the consequence of it hereafter; and the latter part of the chapter expressly speaks of Christ's coming to judgment, and dealing with every one according to his works. If, therefore, the improvement of the talents respects some advantages which one is to expect above another, it seems to intimate that there are degrees of glory.

This is farther argued from the higher degree of grace which some have in this world than others; which is a peculiar honour bestowed on them, and is sometimes considered as the fruit and consequence of their right improvement of the graces which they had formerly received. Their enjoyment of it may be considered as laying a foundation for greater praise; so that the soul must be enlarged in proportion to the grace received, in order that it may give to God the glory due to his name, as the result of what it enjoys. Hence, if we take an estimate of God's future from his present dispensations, it not only removes some objections which are sometimes brought against this doctrine, but adds farther strength to the arguments taken from the scriptures before-mentioned, to prove it. But notwithstanding all that has been said on this subject, it is the safest way for us to confess that we know but little of the affairs of another world, and much less of the circumstances of glorified saints, considered as compared with one another. Nor are we to conclude, if there are degrees of glory, that the highest of these is founded on the merit of what any have done or suffered for Christ, or, on the other hand, that the lowest is inconsistent with complete blessedness; which shall be proportioned to their most enlarged desires, and as much as they are capable of containing. Thus concerning the question proposed by some as to whether there are degrees of glory.

There is another which has some affinity to it, which I would not wholly pass over, namely, whether the saints in heaven shall not have some additional improvements, or make progressive advances, in some things which may be reckoned a farther ingredient in their future happiness. This is to be insisted on with the utmost caution, lest any thing should be advanced which is inconsistent with the complete blessedness which they are immediately possessed of. I do not think, however, that it will detract from it, if we should venture to assert, that the understanding of glorified saints shall receive very considerable improvements, from those objects which shall be presented to them, and from the perpetual discoveries which will be made of the glorious mysteries of divine grace, whereby the whole scene of providence, and its subserviency to their eternal happiness, shall be opened, to raise their wonder, and enhance their praise. As it is not inconsistent with the perfect blessedness of the angels, to desire to know more of this mystery, which they are said to 'look into;'^d and as their joy is increased by those new occasions which daily present themselves; why may not the same be said with respect to the saints in heaven, especially if we consider that this will redound so much to the glory of God, as well as give us more raised ideas of that happiness which they shall be possessed of?

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Final Blessedness.

We shall conclude with some practical inferences from what has been said in this Answer, concerning the happiness of the saints in heaven.

^c Matt. xxv. 14, et seq.

^d 1 Pet. i. 12.

1. We may learn the great difference which there is between the militant and triumphant state of the church. Here believers meet with perpetual conflicts; but hereafter they shall be crowned with complete victory. Now, they walk by faith; but then faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in enjoyment. The saints of God are, at present, in their minority, having a right to their inheritance, but not the possession of it. Their desires are enlarged, and their expectations raised; but nothing can give them full satisfaction till they arrive at that state of perfection to which God will at last bring them.

2. The account which we have of the happiness of heaven being of a spiritual nature, and accompanied with perfect blessedness, and of the enjoyments of heaven being of a corresponding nature, may tend to reprove the carnal conceptions which many entertain concerning it, as though it were no other than what Mahommed promised his followers; who fancy that they shall have there those delights which are agreeable to the sensual appetites of such as have no other ideas of happiness than that it consists in the pleasures of sin. Nor is it enough for us to conceive of the heavenly blessedness as merely a freedom from the miseries of this life, though this is an ingredient in it; nor must we think of it as if it had no reference to the bringing of those graces which are begun here to perfection, or as if it did not consist in the blessed work of admiring and adoring the divine perfections, and improving the displays of these in the Mediator, a work in which the saints shall for ever be engaged.

3. Let us not content ourselves merely with the description which we have in the word of God of the glory of heaven, but inquire whether we have a well-grounded hope that we have a right to it, and are found in the exercise of those graces which will be an evidence of our fitness. It is a very low and insignificant thing for us to be convinced that the glory of heaven contains all those things which shall render those who are possessed of it completely happy, if we have no ground to claim an interest in it; and if we have this ground of hope, it will have a tendency to excite practical godliness, which is inseparably connected with eternal life, and affords an evidence of our right to it. But without this godliness, our hope will be delusive, and we shall be chargeable with an unwarrantable presumption, in expecting salvation without sanctification.

4. If we have any hope concerning future blessedness, it ought to be improved by us, to support and comfort us under the present miseries of life. Thus the apostle exhorts the church to which he writes, to 'comfort one another with these words,'^e or from considerations of the heavenly glory. Our hope should also be an inducement to us to bear afflictions with patience, since these 'work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'^f

5. Let the hope we have of the privileges to be enjoyed hereafter, put us upon the greatest diligence in the performance of those duties which are incumbent on us, as expectants of this inheritance; and let us endeavour to have our conversation in heaven, and be frequently meditating on the blessed employment of that state, and be earnest with God that we may be made more meet for it, and in the end received to it.

6. If we are enabled by faith to conclude that we have a right to the heavenly inheritance, let us be frequently engaged in the work and employment of that inheritance, so far as is consistent with the present imperfect state. Let us be much in praising and blessing God, who has prepared these glorious mansions for his people; and let us set a due value on the blood of Christ, by which they were purchased, and give glory to the Holy Ghost, who has given us the earnest of them, and who, having begun the work of grace, will, we trust, carry it on to perfection.

^e 1 Thess. iv. 18.

^f 2 Cor. iv. 17

MORAL OBLIGATION.

QUESTION XCI. *What is the duty that God requireth of man?*

ANSWER. The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.

QUESTION XCII. *What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?*

ANSWER. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the state of innocency, and to all mankind in him, beside a special command, not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.

HAVING, in the former part of the Catechism, been led to consider what we are to believe concerning God, and those works of nature and grace wherein he has displayed his glory to man, whether considered as created after his image, or as having lost it by sin, and as afterwards redeemed, and made partaker of those blessings which are consequent on redemption; we are now to consider him as under an indispensable obligation to yield obedience to God. They who have received most grace from him, are laid under the strongest ties and engagements to yield obedience.

Man Bound to Obey God.

We observe, then, that obedience is due from man to God. Our obligation to obey results from the relation we stand in to him as creatures; who ought to say with the psalmist, ‘O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.’^g Our obligation results particularly from our being intelligent creatures, having excellencies superior to all others in this world, whereby we are rendered capable, not only of subserving the ends of his providence, but performing obedience as subjects of moral government. But our obligation becomes highest when we are considered as redeemed, justified, and sanctified, and made partakers of all the blessings which accompany salvation. Accordingly, the apostle says, ‘Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’^h Obedience may be considered, not only as our duty, but as our highest wisdom; as it is said, ‘The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding.’ⁱ Hereby, in some measure, we answer the end for which we came into the world; and to render it is our interest, inasmuch as it is conducive to our present and future blessedness, and inseparably connected with it. We are to be very sensible, however, that to yield obedience is out of our own power; as our Saviour says, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’^k We should, therefore, exercise a constant dependence on him who works in his people both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure. We might here consider the nature and properties of that duty and obedience which we owe to God.

1. If it be such as we hope God will accept or approve, it must proceed from a renewed nature, and, in consequence, from a principle of love to God as a reconciled Father; not from a slavish fear and dread of his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge. Thus the psalmist says, ‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.’^l

2. It ought to be without the least reserve, including a ready compliance with whatever he commands. In performing it, we ought to approve ourselves to him as our Sovereign Lord and Lawgiver, and consider that we are under his all-seeing eye. Accordingly, his glory is to be assigned as the highest end of all we do.

3. It ought to be performed with constancy. It does not consist merely in a sudden fit of devotion, arising from the dictates of an awakened conscience, or the dread we have of his wrath, when under some distressing providence; but it ought to be the constant work and business of life.

4. When we have done or suffered most for God, we are not only to consider ourselves as ‘unprofitable servants,’^m as our Saviour expresses it; but we must lament

g Psal. xcv. 6.
k John xv. 5.

h 1 Cor. vi. 20.
l Psal. cxxx. 4.

i Job xxviii. 28.
m Luke xvii. 10.

our imperfections, and be deeply humbled for the iniquities which attend our holy things, inasmuch as 'there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.'ⁿ

Connexion of Revelation with Moral Obligation.

In order to our yielding obedience, it is necessary that God should signify to us, in what instances he will be obeyed, and the manner in which obedience is to be performed; otherwise it would be rather a fulfilling of our own will than of his. None but those who are authorized by God to communicate his will, and who receive what they impart to us by divine inspiration, can, without the boldest presumption, assume to themselves the prerogative of prescribing to us a rule of duty to God. It follows that obedience must be to his revealed will. The secret purposes of God are the rule and measure of his own actings: but his revealed will is the rule of our obedience. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children.'^o

The Law of God as the Rule of Obligation.

The will of God, as thus made known to us, is called a Law. Now, let us consider that a law is the decree or revealed will of a sovereign, designed to direct and govern the actions of his subjects, and thereby to secure his own honour and their welfare. If this be applied to the law of God, we must consider him as our Lord and Sovereign, whose will is the rule of our actions; and he, being infinitely wise and good, is able and inclined to direct us in those things which are conducive to his own honour and our safety and happiness. This he has been pleased to do; and accordingly has given us a law as the rule of life.

The laws of God are in part such as take their rise from his holy nature. Accordingly, our obligation to yield obedience to these proceeds, not only or principally from the command of God, but from their being agreeable to his divine perfections; which must be assigned as the reason of his prescribing them as matter of obligation. These are all reducible to what we call, in general, the law of nature; which, because it is agreeable to the dictates of reason, is called by way of eminence the moral law. Thus when we consider ourselves as creatures, we are led to confess that we are subject to God, and therefore bound to obey him. When we think of him as a God of infinite perfection, our obedience must be agreeable to that perfection. Because he is a Spirit, our obedience must be performed in a spiritual manner; and as he is a holy God, he is to be worshipped with reverence and holy fear. Thus far we are induced to yield obedience by the law of nature.—But, on the other hand, there are many laws relating to the circumstances or manner in which God will be worshipped, which are founded in his sovereign will. These we call positive laws. Of this kind was that law given to our first parents, not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and doubtless, there were many other laws given to them relating to their conduct of life and mode of worship, though they are not particularly mentioned in the short history we have of the state of man before the fall.—As for the moral law, it is said, in one of the Answers we are explaining, to have been revealed to Adam in his state of innocency, and to all mankind in him. Its being revealed to man, must be supposed to be a less proper way of speaking; inasmuch as the method of discovery by revelation is more especially applicable to positive laws. Hence, I would rather choose to express it, as in a foregoing Answer,^p by God's writing his laws in the hearts of our first parents, or impressing the commands of the moral law on their nature; so that by the power of reasoning with which they were endowed, they might attain to the knowledge of them. Accordingly, man, by the light of nature, knew all things contained in the moral law.

As to what is farther said in this Answer, that the moral law was given to man in innocency, we considered this subject elsewhere. And as all mankind were re-

ⁿ Eccl. vii 20.

^o Deut. xxix. 29.

^p See Quest. xvii.

presented by him, we are to understand these words as meaning that it was given to all mankind in him. But these things having been insisted on in another place, as also what relates to his having been prohibited from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, I shall pass them over, and proceed to speak more particularly concerning the moral law, together with the uses of it to all sorts of men.

THE NATURE AND USES OF THE MORAL LAW.

QUESTION XCIII. *What is the moral law?*

ANSWER. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man; promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach, of it.

QUESTION XCIV. *Is there any use of the moral law to man, since the fall?*

ANSWER. Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.

QUESTION XCV. *Of what use is the moral law to all men?*

ANSWER. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

QUESTION XCVI. *What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?*

ANSWER. The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

QUESTION XCVII. *What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?*

ANSWER. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet beside the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care, to conform themselves thereunto, as the rule of their obedience.

The Nature of the Moral Law.

In these Answers we have, first, a description of the moral law.

I. This law is a declaration of the will of God to mankind, that so we may not be destitute of a rule to guide and regulate our behaviour, both towards God and man. This is the first idea contained in a law. But there is another, which respects the obligation which we are laid under by the law, arising from our being creatures, and consequently subject to God, who, as the supreme Governor, has an undoubted right to demand obedience from us to every thing which he prescribes and reveals to us as a rule for our direction. Moreover, that which God requires of us in this law, is, personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience to its precepts.

1. Our obedience must be personal, that is, it is not to be performed by proxy. Whatever services we may expect from men, we must not conclude that they can perform obedience for us to God, and fulfil the obligation which we are personally laid under. Yea, we may proceed farther, and assert that the obedience which Christ has performed for us, does not exempt us from an obligation to yield perfect obedience. Obedience, indeed, is not to be performed by us with the same view with which he performed it. This will be farther considered under a following Head, where we shall show, that though the law is not to be obeyed by us as a covenant of works, yet we are obliged to obey it as a rule of life.

2. Our obedience to the law of God must be perfect. The same obligation

which man was under at first, to yield perfect obedience, remains still in force, though we are not able to perform it. The insolvency of man by the fall, did not cancel or disannul this debt.^q How much soever God may own and approve the sincerity of his people, which is all the perfection that fallen man can arrive at in this world; yet we must not suppose that hereby we fulfil the obligation which God, as a Lawgiver, has laid us under. This I the rather take notice of, that there may not be the least ground to suppose that we make void the law: we rather establish it, and assert the right which God has to that perfection of obedience which is due from us, though unable to perform it.

3. Our obedience must be perpetual, without backsliding from God, or the least remissness in our duty to him. There is no abatement or dispensation allowed, which may give countenance to the least defect of this obedience. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will never forget thy precepts;'^r and, 'Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.'^s—Moreover, this obedience is to be performed with the whole man, and in particular, by the soul, with the utmost intenseness, in all its powers and faculties. Accordingly, our understandings are to be rightly instructed, as to the matter and manner of performing it; our wills to be entirely subjected to the will of God; and our affections engaged in his service, being sanctified and excited by the Spirit, to the end that duty may be performed with delight, arising from the love which we bear to him whose servants we are. Our obedience is to be performed also with our bodies. The former includes that obedience more especially which is internal; this, that which is external. This is what is styled a lower sort of obedience; and if we rest here, it is far from being acceptable, as the apostle says that 'bodily exercise profiteth little.'^t Yet as the body is an instrument of the soul in acting, that service which is performed in it is absolutely necessary. Hence, all religious worship is to be engaged in with a becoming reverence which is external, as well as with that which is internal; without which the soul cannot be said to engage in any religious duties in a becoming manner.—Again, this obedience includes holiness and righteousness. The former of these respects more especially our duty to God, which, being a branch of religious worship, ought to be performed with a reverential fear of his divine Majesty, and a due regard to his infinite purity, and entire dedication and consecration of ourselves to him, as becomes those who are sanctified by his Spirit, and enabled to exercise all those graces whereby we may approve ourselves his faithful servants and subjects. The latter more especially respects those duties which we owe to men, in the various relations we stand in to them, and which are incumbent on us as enjoined by God.

II. The moral law is farther considered as having a promise of life annexed to it, and a threatening of death upon the breach of it. This is what is generally called the sanction annexed to the law. A law without a sanction would not be much regarded, especially by those who have not a due sense of their obligation to obedience. Persons are very much disposed to inquire, when a command is given, what the consequence of their obeying or disregarding it will be; and this being made known beforehand, is a strong motive to obedience. If God is pleased, out of his abundant grace, to encourage his people, by giving them to expect some blessings which he will bestow on those who obey him, it is, in some respect, necessary that his doing so should be known. But especially as punishment, in proportion to the nature of the crime, will be the consequence of disobedience, it is becoming the divine perfections to let it be known that the wages of sin is death. Now, this sanction was not only annexed to the moral law, but equally impressed on the nature of man, who could not but know that rebellion against God would be punished with a separation from him, and that all those miseries which it deserves would attend it, in proportion to its respective aggravation.

^q It is a known maxim in the civil law, *Cessante capacitate subditi non cessat obligatio.*

^r Psal. cxix. 93.

^a Psal. cxlv. 2.

^t 1 Tim. iv. 8.

The Uses of the Moral Law.

We have an account of the use of the moral law since the fall; and that either with respect to mankind in general, or the unregenerate and regenerate. Here it is observed that no man since the fall can attain righteousness and life by it; so that it is not to be used with that view. We may hence infer that this end might have been attained by man before the fall, according to the tenor of the covenant which he was under, the sum and substance of which was, that 'the man that doeth these things shall live by them.'^u Eternal life was promised to man in innocency; and he was then able to yield sinless obedience, which was the condition of his obtaining it. But it is impossible for fallen man thus to obey. How perfect soever his obedience may be for the future, it is supposed, from the nature of the thing, that it cannot be sinless, after sin has been committed; and it would be a reflection on the justice and holiness of God, for us to conclude that he will accept of imperfect obedience, instead of perfect. It follows that a right to life is not to be expected from our imperfect obedience to the law; as the apostle says, 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified,'^x in God's sight. In this respect our own righteousness is represented, not only as faulty and defective, but as altogether insufficient to procure an interest in the divine favour, or to exempt us from the punishment which is due to us for sin. It is one thing to say that eternal life is connected with obedience, so that no one can have the least ground to expect the former without the latter, and another thing to say that eternal life is founded upon obedience, or that it gives us a right and title to it. We are not to conclude, however, that the law is of no use. For,

1. It is of use to all men, in several respects. It informs us of the holy nature and will of God, and of our duty to him. This is the first idea we have of a law,^y which signifies more especially a doctrine; and, as the grand scope of it respects our being taught what we are obliged to as commanded by a lawgiver, it signifies a law. The divine perfections are eminently stamped on it in very legible characters: his sovereignty, as having a right to demand obedience; his holiness in the matter of it, and in the obligation it lays us under to be 'holy in all conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy;^z and therefore this perfection is set forth in those threatenings which are annexed to it, whereby 'the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.'^a As the law is designed to discover our secret faults, that we may be humbled for them, and a multitude of sins may be prevented; so it sets forth, not only the holiness, but the goodness of God. Indeed, there is nothing enjoined in it as our duty, but what includes some advantage. Thus the psalmist describes it as 'more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb;' and adds, that 'in keeping thereof there is great reward.'^b

Again, the moral law is of use to all men, as it binds them to perform that which is enjoined in it as matter of duty. This is another idea contained in a law, namely, it is that which binds the consciences of men, that so we may not vainly and presumptuously conclude, to our own destruction, that we may live as we list, or say, Who is Lord over us? It is a great instance of the care and goodness of God, that he has taken this method to prevent that ruin which would arise from our withdrawing the allegiance which we owe to him, and to lay us under the strictest engagement to seek after that blessedness which is connected with obedience to him.

Further, we are convinced by the moral law of our inability to keep its precepts, and of the sinful pollution of our nature, hearts, and lives, as an expedient to humble us under the sense of sin and misery. The law being spiritual, we are convinced by it that 'we are carnal, and sold under sin,' as the apostle expresses it;^c and he also says, 'I had not known sin, but by the law.'^d When we consider our-

^u Rom. x. 5.
didicit, or viam monstravit.
^c Rom. vii. 14.

^x Chap. iii. 20.
^z 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.
^d Verse 17.

^y Thus the word תורה, is derived from ירה, a Rom. i. 18. ^b Psal. xix. 10, 11.

selves as being obliged to yield perfect obedience, and compare our hearts and lives with the law which requires this, we shall see nothing but holiness and purity on the one hand, and a wretched mass of corruption and impurity on the other. God demands perfect obedience, while we are unable of ourselves to perform any obedience; and our best duties being attended with many imperfections, we are led to be humbled under a sense of sin, whatever thoughts we formerly had of ourselves. When 'the law enters, sin will abound;'^e and if we were apprehensive that 'we were alive,' as the apostle expresses it, 'without the law, when the commandment comes, sin revives and we die,'^f and see ourselves exposed to the miseries threatened against those who violate it.

Hence arises a clear sight of the need which persons have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience. When we find that we are condemned by the law, and that righteousness is not to be attained by our own obedience to it, we are led to see our need of seeking it elsewhere; and when the gospel gives us a discovery of Christ, as ordained by God to procure for us righteousness, or a right to eternal life by his obedience, we see the need we have of faith in him, whereby we derive from him that which could not be attained by our own conformity to the law.

2. The moral law is of use in particular to the unregenerate. We considered, under the former Head, that it is of use to all men, among whom the unregenerate are included, as it gives them a discovery of the pollution and guilt of sin; and now we are led to inquire into the consequence of this. Sin may be charged on the conscience, and the guilt of it make it very uneasy, so that a person may apprehend himself under the condemning sentence of the law; and yet he may receive no saving advantage. He may have a sight of sin, and not be truly humbled for it or turned from it. In some, corruption is excited by conviction; and the soul grows worse than it was before. Thus the apostle says, 'Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.'^g Others, when filled with a dread of the wrath of God, are inclined to stretch out their hand against him, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty; resolving, some way or other, to disentangle themselves, though, by such conduct, they render their condition much worse. These are compared to 'a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord;'^h or, as our Saviour says concerning Paul, before his conversion, 'they kick against the pricks.'ⁱ Every step they take to free themselves from the horrible pit and miry clay into which they are cast, sinks them deeper into it. Others are convinced of sin by the law, and, at the same time, despair of obtaining mercy. They complain with Cain, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear;'^k or, as it is in the margin, 'Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven.' These see themselves lost, or condemned by the law; but have no sight of Christ as coming into the world to save sinners, or, at least, to save the chief of them. The wound is opened; but there are no healing medicines applied. There are others also, whose condition is no less dangerous, in whom 'the wound is healed slightly,' who 'say, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'^l They are, indeed, convinced of sin; and their conviction is attended sometimes with an external humiliation, arising from the dread of God's judgments. This effect it had in Pharaoh^m and Ahab.ⁿ They are willing also to part with some particular sins, while they indulge others, that by this partial reformation they may free themselves from the condemning sentence of the law. But all this is to no purpose; sin gains strength, and the guilt of it is still increased. This is a wrong method to flee from the wrath to come. Hence, when convictions of sin have a good issue, in inciting those who experience them to flee from it, they have recourse to Christ. This is called a being driven to Christ; by which we are to understand that they see themselves under an unavoidable necessity of going to him, as not being able to find peace or solid rest elsewhere. But as this effect is in a peculiar manner ascribed to the gospel, the law being only the remote means of it, I would rather express it by their being drawn to him, or encouraged by the grace contained in the gospel, to close with him by faith; and then the work

e Rom. v. 20.
k Gen. iv. 13.

f Chap. vii. 9.
l Jer. vi. 14.

g Ver. 8.
m Exod. x. 16, 17.

h Isa. li. 20. i Acts. ix. 5.
n 1 Kings xxi. 27—29.

is rendered effectual, and convictions end in a saving conversion. But if it be otherwise, or they apply themselves to indirect means to ease themselves of the burden which lies on them, they are farther described as left inexcusable, and still remaining under the curse and condemning sentence of the law.

3. The moral law is of use to the regenerate. In considering this, it may be observed that there is something supposed in the Answer which treats on this subject, namely, that they who believe in Christ are delivered from the law as a covenant of works. This is the only sense in which we are to understand those scriptures which speak of believers as 'not being under the law,'^o and as being 'dead to the law,'^p having been 'redeemed from its curse.'^q The moral law is to be considered in two respects, as a rule of life, and so no one is delivered from it; or as a covenant of works, in the same sense in which it was given to man in innocency, the condition of which was his performing perfect obedience, in default whereof he was liable to a sentence of death. In the latter respect a believer is delivered from it. This deliverance is the great privilege which believers are made partakers of in the gospel; which sets forth Christ as our surety, performing perfect obedience for us, and enduring the curse we were liable to. Hence, though the law was a covenant of works to him, it ceases to be so to those who are interested in him. Accordingly, it is added, that they are hereby neither justified nor condemned. They are not justified by it; for the apostle says, 'By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.'^r Justification is to be expected only from him who is 'the Lord our Righteousness';^s 'in whom all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and glory.'^t Nor are they condemned by the law; for that they should be so is inconsistent with a justified state. Thus the apostle says, 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'^u We must distinguish, however, between a believer's actions being condemned by the law, or his being reproved by it, and laid under conviction, for sins daily committed; and his being in a condemned state, according to the sentence of the law. We are far from denying that a believer is under an obligation to condemn or abhor himself, that is, to confess that he deserves to be condemned by God, for the sins which he commits; for were God to mark these, or to punish him according to the demerit of them, he could not stand. Thus the psalmist says, though speaking of himself as a believer, and consequently in a justified state, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.'^x This a believer may say, and yet not conclude himself to be in a state of condemnation; inasmuch as he sees himself by faith to have ground to determine that he is delivered from the law, and so not condemned by it, as a covenant of works.

It is observed, on the other hand, in the Answer under our present consideration, that the moral law is of use to a believer, in those respects in which it is of use to all men. He is hence laid under the strictest obligation to perform all the duties which we owe to God and man, and to be humbled for those defects which he has reason to charge himself with, which call for the daily exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

But as to the special use of the moral law to those who are regenerate, as distinguished from all others, it is said to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring its curse in their stead and for their good. Christ is said to be 'the end of the law for righteousness';^y that is, he has answered the end and demand of the law, by performing that obedience which it requires, and thereby procuring a justifying righteousness, which is applied to every one who believes. This lays them under a superadded obligation to obedience, peculiar to them as believers; so that they are engaged to the practice of universal holiness, not only from the consideration of the sovereignty of God commanding them in common with all others, but from 'the love of Christ,' which does as it were 'constrain them' to obey.^z Hereby also they are said to be provoked to more thankfulness, as they have greater inducements to it than any others; and this gratitude cannot be better expressed than by the utmost care to approve themselves to him

^o Rom. vi. 14.
^t Isa. xlv. 25.

^p Chap. vii. 4.
^u Rom. viii. 1.

^q Gal. iii. 13.
^x Psal. cxliii. 2.

^r Rom. iii. 20.
^y Rom. x. 4.

^s Jer. xxiii. 6.
^z 2 Cor. v. 14.

in all things. The grace of God, therefore, is so far from leading to licentiousness, that all who have experienced it are put by it upon the exercise of that obedience which they owe to God as their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and to Christ as their gracious Redeemer, whom they love entirely, and therefore keep his commandments.

Strictures on Antinomianism.

I cannot but here take occasion to observe, not only with dislike, but a just indignation, how some, under a pretence of religion, sap the very foundation of it, while they frequently make mention of the gospel, and the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, and at the same time abuse it, not only by practising but pleading for licentiousness. The Epicureans were libertines among the heathen, and the Sadducees among the Jews; but these were vile and profligate out of principle, either denying the being of a God, or disowning his perfections as well as future rewards and punishments; so that it is no wonder that they had no regard to the divine law. But I want words to express the wickedness of those who pervert the gospel of Christ, so as to make it appear to exempt them from the obligation which all are under to universal obedience. The apostle had to do with some such in his day; and he represents them as saying, 'Is the law sin?'^a a question which may be paraphrased, 'Since we are delivered from the condemning sentence of the law, may we not take encouragement thence to sin?' or, as he elsewhere brings them in as saying, 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?'^b To both these questions he replies, with the greatest detestation, 'God forbid.' Afterwards, in an early age of the church, the Nicolaitans^c and Gnostics, and among them, the Valentinians, held these pernicious opinions, and encouraged themselves in the practice of the greatest immoralities.^d Augustin speaks also of the Arians and Eunomians, who lived in his time, who pretended that any who persisted in the vilest crimes, would receive no detriment, provided they adhered to the sentiments which they advanced.^e There are many likewise in later ages, whose sentiments have been, in this respect, subversive of all religion; and from their denying the obligation we are under to yield obedience to the law of God, are justly called Antinomians.

But that we may not appear to be unjust to the characters of men, let it be considered that we are not here speaking of the charge of Antinomianism, which some who defend or oppose the doctrines of grace bring against each other, supposing that their respective sentiments lead to licentiousness. The Papists and Pelagians pretend, though unjustly, that the doctrine of predestination, efficacious grace, and the final perseverance of the saints, is liable to this charge; while they, on the other hand, lay themselves open to the same charge, by advancing doctrines which have the most pernicious tendency, as subversive of practical godliness, in various instances,—particularly by their asserting that God, in the gospel-covenant, dispenses with imperfect obedience instead of perfect, and that this is only such as we are able to perform without the aids of divine grace. We leave each party, however, to defend their scheme from this imputation. As to others who are more especially known by the character of Antinomians, they are of two sorts. The first are such as openly maintain that the moral law is not a rule of life in any sense; that good works are not to be insisted on as having any reference to salvation; that, therefore, if persons presume, as they, according to them, ought to do, that Christ died for them, and that they were justified before they had a being, they may live in the practice of the greatest immoralities, or give countenance to those who do so, without entertaining the least doubt of their salvation; and that it is a preposterous thing, for those who thus presumptuously conclude themselves to be justified, to confess themselves guilty of sin, since to do so would be to deny that they are in a justified state,—or in any sense to pray for the pardon

^a Rom. vii. 7. ^b Chap. vi. 1. ^c Rev. ii. 6. ^d Vid. Cav. Hist. Lit. tom. i. page 30.

^e Vid. Aug. de Hæres. cap. liv. where speaking of Eunomius, he says, Fertur etiam usque adeo fuisse bonis moribus inimicus, ut asseveraret, quod nihil cuique obesset, quorum libet perpetratio ac perseverantia peccatorum, si hujus quæ ab illo docebatur, fidei particeps esset.

of sin, since to do this would argue that sin is not forgiven. Nor can they, with any tolerable degree of patience, entertain the least exhortations to practical godliness; because they pretend that they are exempted from the obligation to perform any branch of it, by their not being under the law. Nay, some of them have been so impudent and daringly wicked as to assert that, if they should commit murder, adultery, or any other crimes of a similar nature, even this would be no bar in the way of their salvation; and that the most vile sins which can be committed, will do them no hurt, nor in the least affect their eternal state. I have, indeed, sometimes thought that this representation of Antinomianism was only a consequence deduced from some absurd doctrines which have been maintained; or that so much of hell could never put on the mask or show of religion in any degree; and that this character belonged to none but those who are open and professed atheists. But though my lot has not been cast among persons of so vile a character, yet I have been informed by those whose souls have been grieved with their conversation, that there are some in the world who thus set themselves against the law of God.

There are others, indeed, who are styled Antinomians, whose conversation is blameless, and are not therefore to be ranked with these men, or judged Antinomians in practice; who nevertheless, do great disservice to the truth, and, it may be, give occasion to some to be licentious, by advancing unguarded expressions which will admit of a double construction, without condescending to explain some bold positions which they occasionally lay down. Thus, when they maintain eternal justification, without considering it as an immanent act in God, or as his secret determination not to impute sin to those who are given to Christ; but ascribe that to it which is only to be applied to justification, as it is the result of God's revealed will, in which respect it is said to be by faith; and when they encourage persons from hence to conclude that their state is safe, and maintain that it is the duty of every one to believe that he is thus justified; they certainly advance positions which have a tendency to lead some out of the way of truth and holiness, whether they design so or not. Again, when others speak diminutively of good works, as though they were in no sense necessary to salvation, because they are not the matter of our justification; some may take occasion to think that they may be saved without them.—Further, when others deny the law to be a rule of life, or assert that believers have nothing to do with it; though, it may be, they mean nothing else but that it is not that rule according to which God proceeds in justifying his people or in giving them a right to eternal life, or that a believer is not under the law as a covenant of works; yet many would be ready to think that their words had a different meaning, and so be led out of the way by them, how far soever this might be from their intention.—Moreover, if a person seems studiously to avoid confessing sin or praying for forgiveness, some would be ready to judge of his sentiments by his practice; and certainly our denying either of these to be a duty in any sense, is not only contrary to scripture, but inconsistent with the humility and faith which are essential to practical godliness. Or when persons deny that self-examination is a duty, and speak of all marks and evidences of grace, though never so just and agreeable to the scripture-account of them, as legal, or as a low way of a person's coming to the knowledge of himself, or suppose that these marks and evidences are unnecessary, as being inconsistent with the Spirit's testimony; this has a tendency to lead to presumption, which is a degree of licentiousness.—Again, when they assert that God is not angry with his people for their sins, nor, in any sense, punishes them for them, without distinguishing between fatherly chastisements, and the stroke of vindictive justice, or the external and sensible effects of that hatred which God cannot but exercise against sin, and his casting them out of a justified state; such doctrines lead some persons to licentiousness, whatever be the secret meaning of those who advance them. We have an instance of this, as the historian observes,^f in Agricola, who was Luther's townsman, and great admirer. He, as is probable, did not thoroughly understand what Luther maintained concerning the subserviency of the law to the gospel, and its having no place in the justification of a sinner; or else,

^f See Sleid. Comment. de Stat. Relig. et Repub. lib. xii.

from some unguarded expressions which Luther was sometimes apt to make use of, this friend of his took occasion to advance some Antinomian tenets, namely, that repentance ought not to be urged from the consideration of the breach of the law, that the gospel ought to be preached to sinners before they are brought under conviction by the law, and that, how scandalous and debauched soever persons be in their lives, yet, if they do but believe the promises of the gospel, they shall be justified. In these doctrines, Agricola was followed by a party of men. Accordingly Antinomianism is said to have taken its rise, in this part of the world, from that time. Luther, on the other hand, was forced to take a great deal of pains to rectify his mistakes ; which, though it tended to Agricola's conviction, yet did not put a stop to the spread of his errors, which he had before propagated.

As for those who were charged with Antinomianism in England, in the last century, such as Dr. Crisp, Eaton, Saltmarsh, Town, and others, whatever their design might be, and how much soever they were remote from the charge of Antinomianism in practice ; though it be alleged by some in their vindication that the principal thing they had in view was to bear their testimony against the prevailing doctrine of Arminianism, which was studiously propagated by some persons of great character and influence in the nation ; yet we cannot but conclude that they would have done more service to the cause of truth, had they been more cautious in explaining their sentiments, and saved those who had favourable thoughts of them, in other respects, the trouble of producing some expressions out of their writings, to convince the world that they did not hold those dangerous notions which were charged upon them. It is too evident to be denied, that many have understood their opinions in the worst sense ; who have hence been ready to charge the most important doctrines of the gospel with leading to licentiousness. One result has been, that some are more sparing in defending those truths which ought to be insisted on and explained, though in words more intelligible and unexceptionable.

THE JUDICIAL AND THE CEREMONIAL LAW.

QUESTION. XCVIII. *Where is the moral law summarily comprehended ?*

ANSWER. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone, and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus ; the four first commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.

HAVING considered the moral law, as written on the heart of man at first, and the knowledge of it as in some degree attainable by all who exercise their reasoning powers ; we are, in this and some following Answers, led to consider that epitome or abstract of it which was given to the Israelites by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, which is contained in the Ten Commandments. But as we are considering this instance of divine condescension to them, it may not be reckoned altogether foreign to our present design, to give some brief account of those other laws which God gave, together with the moral law, most of which were communicated from mount Sinai. We may observe, therefore, that, together with the moral law, there were several forensic or judicial laws given by God for the government of the people of Israel, which more especially respected their civil rights. And there were other laws which had a more immediate subserviency to their attaining the knowledge of those things which related to the way of salvation by the promised Messiah, which are more fully revealed in the gospel. These are what we call the ceremonial law. Both are to be considered before we come to speak concerning the moral law, as summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

The Judicial Law.

We shall speak first concerning the judicial law. It cannot be supposed that so great a people, so much interested in the care of God, to whom he condescended

to be their king, should be without a body of laws for their government. Accordingly, there were some given them by him, which were founded in and agreeable to the law of nature and nations; which all well-governed states observe to this day, such as that murder should be punished with death, and that theft should be punished with restitution or some other punishments which may best tend to deter men from it. Moreover, there were other judicial laws given to Israel, which had a more immediate tendency to promote their civil welfare, as a nation distinguished from all others in the world; which laws expired when their civil polity was extinct. These were the following:—

1. Such as tended to prevent the alienation of inheritances from the respective families to which they were at first given. God commanded, that if a man died without children, his brother should marry his widow to raise up seed to him, to inherit his estate and name.^g

2. If an Israelite had become poor, and was obliged to sell his land for the payment of his debts, the purchaser was to admit any of his family to redeem it; or, if they could not, he was, nevertheless, to restore the land at the year of jubilee, which was every fiftieth year.^h

3. If an Hebrew servant was sold for the payment of debts, which he could not otherwise discharge, his master was obliged to release him after six years' service.ⁱ But if the servant chose to stay with his master longer than that time, out of the love he bare to him; then he was to have his ear bored, as a token that he should serve him, without being subject to the aforesaid laws, which made provision for his discharge after a certain number of years.^k

4. The land was to lie untilled, and the vineyards and olive-yards were to be free for every one to come and eat of the fruit of them every seventh year. This law was designed more especially for the relief of the poor amongst them, who had no distinct inheritance of their own.^l

5. They were prohibited from taking usury of an Israelite, though they might of a stranger. The reason of this law might be that they might exercise brotherly kindness and charity to one another, in which sense the law is in force to this day; especially when the poor borrow money to supply themselves with necessary food, in which case it is now unlawful to take usury. Or the reason of it was, that the Israelites lived upon their farms or cattle, by which they seldom got more than what was a necessary provision for their families; so that the paying of usury whenever they were necessitated to borrow money, would have proved their ruin in the end. Hence they were not to take usury of an Israelite, but of a stranger they might; because these enriched themselves by merchandise, and were gainers in a way of trade by what they borrowed.

6. All the males were to come up to Jerusalem, to appear before God, and perform public worship in the temple three times a-year, namely, at the solemn festivals,—the passover, pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles.^m

7. Six cities of refuge were appointed for those to flee to for protection, who killed any one by accident; though a near kinsman, as an avenger of blood, might kill the manslayer before he came to one of these cities. The design of this law was to induce them to take care that none might lose their lives through inadvertency. And there was provision made in these cities for the manslayer to dwell safely; whereby a just difference was put between such an one, and a wilful murderer.ⁿ Thus concerning the judicial laws.

The Ceremonial Law.

We now proceed to consider the ceremonial laws which were given them, the design of which was to lead them into the knowledge of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, then to come.^o These may be considered under six heads, which we shall briefly notice.

g Deut. xxv. 5, 6; Matt. xxii. 24.

k Exod. xxi. 5, 6. l Chap. xxiii. 10.

o Heb. x. 1; Gal. iii. 24, 25.

h Levit. xxv. 11—13, 25—27.

i Exod. xxi. 2.

m Deut. xvi. 16, 17. n Numb. xxxv. 15, 26, 27.

1. It was ordained that all their males should be circumcised. Circumcision was designed to be a visible mark put on the church, whom God had set apart for himself, that they might be distinguished from the world. But the principal design of it was, that it might be a sign or seal of the blessings of the covenant of grace, in which God promised that he would be 'a God to them;' and by observing this rite, they were to own themselves as his people.^p

2. There were various ways, whereby persons were reckoned unclean, and ordinances appointed for their cleansing. They were rendered unclean by eating those birds, beasts, fishes, and creeping things, which God had pronounced unclean, and not designed for food.^q Moreover, they were polluted by touching the dead bodies of such unclean birds, beasts, fishes, or creeping things.^r Again, some diseases, incident to the bodies of men, which were more than ordinarily noisome, rendered them unclean, such as the issue, leprosy,^s &c. Besides, the clothes they wore, the houses they lived in, the beds on which they lay, their ovens, and the vessels used in eating or drinking, were, on several accounts, deemed unclean; and accordingly were either to be cleansed or destroyed, otherwise the owners of them would be polluted by them.^t This law was designed to signify how odious and abominable sin, which is a moral pollution, is in God's account, who is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.'^u We might also observe that there were various ordinances appointed for their cleansing, in order to which, several sacrifices were to be offered, and divers washings with water.^x The former signified the way of our being delivered from sin by the blood of Christ, as the procuring cause of forgiveness;^y the latter, our being cleansed from sin by the internal, powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration and sanctification.^z

3. There were holy places, such as the tabernacle and temple, with their vessels and ornaments. The tabernacle was erected according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount;^a and was so framed that it might be taken to pieces, and removed from place to place, as often as the host of Israel changed their station in the wilderness. Accordingly, there were Levites appointed to take it down and set it up; and also waggons, with oxen, to carry it, excepting those parts of it which belonged to the holiest of all, which were to be carried on men's shoulders.^b The temple was the fixed place appointed for public worship at Jerusalem; first built by Solomon, and afterwards rebuilt by Zerubbabel. Both this and the tabernacle signified that God would dwell in the midst of his people, and accept that solemn and instituted worship which was to be performed by his church in all ages. The temple was designed to be a type of the incarnation of the Son of God, who is styled 'Emmanuel, God with us;' and who, in allusion to it, calls his body a temple.^c Moreover, the courts of the tabernacle and temple, and the ministry performed in them, had each its respective signification annexed to it. That in which the priests came daily to minister, wherein gifts and sacrifices were offered, prefigured Christ's offering himself a sacrifice upon earth, for the sins of his people. And the inner court, which was the holiest of all, into which none but the high priest was to enter, and that with blood and incense, signified Christ's 'entering into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us.'^d

As for the vessels of the tabernacle and temple, some of these were in the first court, which is also called 'the sanctuary; in which was the candlestick, the table, and the show-bread,'^e the laver and the altar;^f all which were designed for types. The candlestick signified the church, and the preaching the gospel therein; whereby light is held forth to the world.^g The show-bread set up, signified the communion which the members of the church have with Christ, and with one another;^h as he styles himself the 'bread of life,' or, 'the bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.'ⁱ The laver signified that, when we draw nigh to God, our persons and our services ought to be pure and holy. To this the

p Gen. xvii. 7, 10.

q Lev. xi.

r Verse 31.

s Lev. xv. 2, et seq. and chap. xiii.

t See a particular account hereof in Lev. xi. 15.

u Hab. i. 13.

x Lev. xiii—xv.

y Heb. ix. 13, 14; Eph. i. 7.

z Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; Heb. x. 22; Tit. iii. 5, 6.

a Exod. xxv. 40.

b Numb. vii. 6.

c John ii. 19.

d Heb. ix. 24.

e Lev. xxiv. 2—7;

Heb. ix. 2.

f Exod. xxx. 18.

g Rev. i. 20; Matt. v. 14.

h 1 Cor. x. 17.

i John vi. 33.

apostle alludes, when he says, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'^k The altar, which was holy, and sanctified the gift that the high-priest offered on it,^l so that 'every thing that touched it was holy,'^m signified that the divine nature of Christ added an infinite worth to what he did in the human, in which he offered himself a sacrifice to God. These were the vessels in the outer court.—Those in the inward court, or holiest of all, 'in which were the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat,'ⁿ were a symbol and type of God's special presence with his people, which is their glory, or of the Son of God's dwelling with us in our nature. The mercy-seat, which was placed over the ark, signified that the mercy of God was displayed to sinners through Christ. The cherubim of glory with their wings spread, overshadowing and looking down upon the mercy-seat, signified that the angels behold and admire the stupendous work of our redemption.^o The altar of incense, and the golden censer, were types of the intercession of Christ for his people; and the fragrance of the incense typified the acceptableness of that intercession in the sight of God. There were, besides, three more things in the holiest of all, which are particularly mentioned. One was 'the pot of manna,' which was miraculously preserved from corruption throughout their generations, as a memorial of the bread which God had fed them with in the wilderness, and a type of Christ, the bread of life, who was to come down from heaven.^p There was also Aaron's rod, which was preserved in memory of the wonders which were wrought by it in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. It is said also to have 'blossomed and yielded almonds;'^q which seemed to typify the flourishing state of the gospel, which is called, 'the rod of God's strength.'^r Moreover, the two tables of the law were put into the ark, whereby the exceeding holiness of the law was signified, and also that it should be fulfilled and magnified by Christ, when he came to dwell among us. Thus we have given a brief account of the holy vessels of the temple and the tabernacle.

We might have added that there were various ornaments of the temple and the tabernacle. They were adorned with silver, gold, and precious stones, carved, and curious needle-work; which rendered them exceedingly rich and beautiful. The temple, in particular, was the wonder of the world, far surpassing all other buildings, either before or since.^s Its splendour may be supposed to shadow forth the spiritual beauty and glory of the gospel-church, and of the heavenly state, in which the church shall be brought to its utmost perfection.^t Thus concerning those holy places, which were immediately designed for worship.

There were other holy places, such as the land of Canaan, which was styled 'the holy land,' while the inhabitants of it were called 'a holy nation,' or 'the people of his holiness.'^u As this was a place where God gave them rest, and a settlement, after forty years' travel in the wilderness, it was a type of that rest which the church was to expect from Christ under the gospel.^x Moreover, Jerusalem was an holy city;^y because thither the tribes went up to worship,^z and God was present with them there.^a

4. There were laws which respected those whom God had appointed to be ministers in holy things. These were the Priests; the Levites, who were to assist the former in some parts of their office; but especially the High-priest, who was the chief or head of them all, and who is considered as an eminent type in several respects of Christ's priestly office.^b There were also various ceremonies instituted, which were observed in the consecration of them. In particular, they were to be washed with water;^c ablution with which was a rite used in the consecration of persons and things, and signified that they who ministered in holy things should be holy in their conversation. Moreover, there were several garments to be made and put on them, which are styled 'holy,' and designed 'for glory and for beauty.'^d These

k Heb. x. 22.

l Matt. xxiii. 19.

m Exod. xxix. 37.

n Heb. ix. 3—5.

o 1 Pet. i. 12.

p John vi. 48—50.

q Numb. xvii. 8.

r Psal. cx. 2.

s Exod. xxv. 3—7; 1 Chron. xxix. 2—5.

t Rev. xxi. 11—23.

u Isa. lxiii. 18.

x Isa. xi. 10; Heb. iv. 9.

y Nehem. xi. 1; Matt. iv. 5.

z Psal. cxxii. 4.

a Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 28.

b Heb. v. 1—5.

c Exod. xxix. 4.

d Chap. xxviii. 2, et seq.

signified the dignity and holiness of Christ's priesthood. In particular, the breast-plate, adorned with precious stones, on which the names of the children of Israel were engraven, which was worn only by the high-priest, and with which he was to go into the holy of holies, signified the concern of Christ's people in the execution of his priestly office, and his representing them when appearing in the presence of God for them. Again, the priests were anointed with the precious ointment compounded for that purpose;^e whereby they were set apart or consecrated to minister in the priest's office, and were types of Christ. On this account he is said to be 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.'^f

5. There were laws respecting the temple-service, or the gifts and sacrifices which were to be offered there. There were many gifts presented or devoted to God; some of which were designed, not for sacrifice, but to testify their acknowledgment of God's right to all we are and have. Among these, the first ripe fruits were offered, or presented, as gifts to him.^g As for those things which were designed for sacrifice, they were offered, and their blood poured forth on the altar; which signified the expiation of sin by the blood of Jesus.^h That part of the high-priest's office, which respected his carrying the blood with the incense, into the holiest of all, was a type of Christ's 'entering into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God' for his people.ⁱ

6. There were laws which respected the holy times or festivals appointed for solemn worship. Some of these festivals were monthly, as the new moons; others annual, as the passover. The latter was not only a commemorative sign of their having been formerly delivered from the sword of the destroying angel, when he slew the first-born of Egypt; but it typified our deliverance from the stroke of vindictive justice, on which account Christ is called 'our passover.'^k There was also the feast of harvest, in which the first-fruits were presented to God as an acknowledgment that he has a right to the best of our time and service. There was likewise the feast of tabernacles; which not only called to remembrance their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, but was an acknowledgment that we are strangers and sojourners upon earth, and was also a type of Christ, who was expected to come and pitch his tabernacle among us in his incarnation.—There are many other laws, both judicial and ceremonial, which I might have mentioned; but as these things are only spoken of occasionally, in connection with their having been imparted by God to Israel, by the hand of Moses, from mount Sinai, about the same time that the ten commandments were given,^l we shall add no more concerning them.

The Legislation from Horeb.

We proceed to consider what is particularly mentioned in this Answer, concerning God's giving the abstract of the moral law contained in the ten commandments. This was delivered by a voice; in respect to which God is said to have 'talked with them face to face.'^m But at the same time there were many ensigns of terrible majesty attending the delivery of this law. 'The mountain burned with fire.'ⁿ There were 'lightnings, thunderings, and earthquakes, and the sound of a trumpet, that waxed louder and louder; which made the people, and Moses himself, exceedingly tremble.'^o There was also the ministry of angels, who performed that part of the work which they were employed in on this solemn occasion. This is described in a majestic style, becoming the subject insisted on, when it is said, 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law.'^p Their ministry might probably consist in their forming the thunder, lightnings, and tempest. Yet the law was not originally from them, but given immediately by God. The design of its being given in such an awful and majestic way, was that God might hereby set forth his greatness, and fill them with a reverential fear of him; and to intimate that, if they did not yield obedience to him,

^e Exod. xxx. 25, 30.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 24.

ⁿ Exod. xix. 18.

^f Psal. xlv. 7.

^k 1 Cor. v. 7.

^o Chap. xx. 18; Heb. xii. 18, 19.

^g Exod. xxix. 29.

^l Deut. iv. 12, 13.

^h Heb. ix. 22, 23, 26.

^m Chap. v. 4.

^p Deut. xxxiii. 2.

they were to expect nothing else but to be consumed by the fire of his jealousy. It was an intimation, however, not that he designed to destroy them, but that he designed to prove them; as it is said, that 'his fear might be before their faces, that they should not sin.'^a What we may farther observe is, that, after God had delivered the ten commandments by words, he wrote them with his own finger on two tables of stone. In these ten commandments, written on the two tables, the whole moral law is summarily comprehended. This is particularly explained in several following Answers.

RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

QUESTION XCIX. *What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?*

ANSWER. For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed,

I. That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever, so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.

This implies that, how unable soever we are to yield perfect obedience, yet it does not cease to be a duty; and that, though some sins are smaller than others, yet the least is contrary to the law of God, and therefore not to be committed by us.

II. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers, of the soul, as well as words, works, and gestures.

This denotes that obedience ought to be performed in a spiritual manner. God is to be worshipped with our spirits; without which, all external modes of worship will avail nothing. Nevertheless, external worship is to be performed and expressed by words, works, and gestures; and it therefore supposes that our understandings are rightly informed, or that we do not worship an unknown God,—that our wills express a readiness to obey him out of choice, and without the least reluctance,—and that our affections must centre in him, we performing the duties incumbent on us, with the utmost delight and pleasure.

III. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden, in several commandments.

Thus covetousness is forbidden in the tenth commandment. Yet as by this sin the world is loved more than God, it is a breach of the first commandment, and as such is styled 'idolatry.'^r

IV. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

Thus the fifth commandment requires us to honour our superiors. It hence forbids our reproaching them, or doing any thing dishonourable or injurious to them.^s The eighth commandment forbids stealing; and it also requires the contrary duty, namely, that we should labour for a competent maintenance, that we may not be exposed to any temptation to steal. Thus it is said, 'Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.'^t Moreover, as there is a promise of long life annexed to the fifth commandment, this promise includes the contrary threatening to those that break it. Thus it is said, 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'^u On the other hand, whatever threatening is annexed to any commandment, the contrary promise is included, and belongs to those who repent of, abhor, and turn from the sin forbidden. Thus it is said, 'At what instant I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up

and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.’^x

V. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty, and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

Thus sin is, under no pretence, to be committed. Accordingly, Moses, when he was in a prosperous condition in Pharaoh’s court, though he might have pretended that his greatness, and the advantages which Israel might have expected from it, would be an excuse for his continuing to enjoy the pleasures of sin there; yet he was sensible that these considerations would not exempt him from guilt. Hence, ‘he forsook Egypt, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.’^y—Again, what God commands is always a duty; so that there is no season of life in which it ceases to be so, for example, praying, reading, hearing the word, &c. Yet these duties are not actually to be engaged in every moment of our lives. It is always our duty to visit the sick, comfort the afflicted, defend the oppressed; but such objects do not always present themselves to us, so as to render it our duty at all times.

VI. That, under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded, together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Thus, according to the fourth commandment, it is our duty to sanctify the Sabbath, and consequently to avoid every thing which may be a means or occasion of our breach of it. In the sixth commandment murder is forbidden; so is likewise all sinful passion or anger with our brethren without a cause.^z In the seventh, adultery is forbidden; so is also ‘looking on a woman to lust after her.’^a And as we are obliged to ‘abstain’ from every sin forbidden, so ‘from all appearance of evil,’^b or what may be an occasion of it. Thus ‘fathers’ are ‘not to provoke their children to wrath;’^c and according to the moral reason of the command, we are not to provoke any one to wrath, or do that which may excite their corruptions.

VII. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.

Not to endeavour to prevent sin in others, is, in effect, to commit it ourselves. Thus Eli contracted the guilt of his son’s crimes, by not endeavouring to prevent them. Persons are said to ‘hate their brethren in their hearts’ who ‘do not rebuke them, but suffer sin upon them.’^d And Abraham is commended for his having ‘commanded his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord.’^e It is hence a duty for parents to instruct their children in the ways of God.’^f

VIII. That, in what is commanded to others, we are bound according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them, and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

That we are to be helpful to others, in that which is their duty, appears from our obligation to endeavour that God may be glorified. Hence, we are, to our utmost, to promote their faith and joy in Christ. Thus the apostle says, ‘We are helpers of your joy.’^g On the other hand, we ought to take care that we do not partake with others in their sin. Thus the psalmist says, ‘When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.’^h

x Jer. xviii. 7, 8.
b 1 Thess. v. 22.
f Deut. vi. 6, 7.

y Heb. xi. 25.
c Eph. vi. 4.
g 2 Cor. i. 24.

z Matt. v. 22.
d Lev. xix. 17.
h Psal. l. 18.

a Matt. v. 28.
e Gen. xviii. 19.

THE PREFACE AND SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

QUESTION C. *What special things are we to consider in the Ten Commandments?*

ANSWER. We are to consider in the Ten Commandments, the preface, the substance of the commandments themselves, and several reasons annexed to some of them, the more to enforce them.

QUESTION CI. *What is the preface to the Commandments?*

ANSWER. The preface to the Commandments is contained in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being Jehovah, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God, having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works; and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom; and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments

QUESTION CII. *What is the sum of the four Commandments, which contain our duty to God?*

ANSWER. The sum of the four Commandments containing our duty to God, is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind.

THESE ANSWERS contain some things necessary to be observed.

I. The substance of each commandment is to be considered by us; or what it is which God enjoins or forbids in it. We find that every commandment contains a distinct head of duty, and is to be explained according to the rules laid down in the foregoing Answer. We find also that some of them have reasons annexed to them; and it is an instance of God's condescending goodness, that, besides the consideration of our obligation to obey whatever he commands because it is his will, we may have other motives to enforce obedience. What these reasons or motives are, will be considered in their proper place.

II. Here is a general preface, which God has set before the commandments, and which contains several motives to obedience. Some of these, indeed, were peculiarly adapted to the Israelites, whereby they were put in mind of their late deliverance out of the land of Egypt. Yet if we consider the moral reason of the preface, as it, together with the matter of the commandments to which it is prefixed, may be applied to God's people in all ages, we shall find that it extends farther than to show the obligation which Israel was under, as delivered from the Egyptian bondage.

1. We observe, then, that God reveals himself as the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah, a God of infinite sovereignty and almighty power, as well as faithful to his promises. Hence, whatever he obliges us to do, or gives us encouragement to expect from him, we have the highest motive and inducement to do and expect.

2. He styles himself his people's God; and so puts them in mind of that relation which they stand in to him, as the result of the covenant of grace, in which he gives them a warrant to lay claim to those spiritual blessings which he bestows on a people nigh unto him. This is considered as a farther obligation to obedience. The covenant of grace respects either the external dispensation of it which belongs to the church in general, that is, to all who are made partakers of the glad tidings of salvation which are contained in the gospel; or else that particular claim which believers have to the saving blessings which are made over to them in it, which respects all those graces which God is pleased to give his people here, and that glory which he has reserved for them hereafter; and this must certainly be reckoned the highest motive to duty.

3. As to God's having brought Israel 'out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' it is to be extended farther than that particular providence, which was then fresh in their memories. It denotes all the deliverances which God is pleased to vouchsafe to his people, whether temporal or spiritual,—in particular, that which was procured for us by Christ, from the bondage and thralldom of sin and Satan, the condemning sentence of the law, together with the salvation which is inseparably connected with it. This deliverance is to be improved by us as an inducement to yield universal obedience to all God's commandments.

There are some, indeed, who think that we should call the preface a part of the first

commandment; and so the meaning is, 'Thou art to know, and practically consider, that I am the Lord thy God,' as containing the affirmative part of the commandment; and then follows the negative, 'Thou shalt have no other gods.' Or they suppose the sentence to be a reason annexed to this commandment in particular. But it seems most probable that it is a preface to all the commandments; and that, accordingly, it is to be applied as a motive to enforce obedience to every one of them.

III. We have farther an account of the sum of the four commandments which contain our duty to God. Here we may observe, that the sum of all the commandments is love. This is what the apostle intends, when he says, 'The end of the commandment is charity,' or rather 'love,' as it ought to be rendered.ⁱ Accordingly, he says, 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.'^k This love hath either God or man for its object, and comprises the duties which we owe to God or man. All these duties are reduced to this general Head, that hereby we may understand that obedience, whether it be to God or man, is to be performed with delight. Without this, it will be a burden to us and unacceptable to him, who has obliged us to love him and keep his commandments, because he first loved us.

These commandments, as they respect our duty to God and man, are comprised in two tables, which are to be divided according to their respective objects. Some ancient writers, indeed, have very injudiciously supposed that the five first commandments belong to the first table, and the others to the second; and so make an equal division of them. The Papists, on the other hand, have assigned but three to the first table, making the second commandment an appendix to the first; and, that the number ten may be complete, they divide the tenth commandment into two. The reason urged by them for this matter, will be considered in its proper place. We are bound to conclude, however, that the first four commandments contain the duties of the first table; and are those which respect the duties which we owe immediately to God. These are to be performed, as our Saviour says, 'with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.'^l This is an idea superior to that which is contained in the duty we owe to man. The six last commandments contain the duties of the second table, of which our neighbour is the more immediate object. That this division of the commandments is just, appears from what the apostle says when, speaking concerning the duty contained in the fifth commandment, 'Honour thy father and mother,' he calls it 'the first commandment with promise.'^m Now, it is not the first commandment which has a promise annexed to it, since the second commandment contains a promise of mercy to 'thousands of them that love God and keep his commandments;' nor is it the first of the ten commandments. The apostle, therefore, can intend nothing by calling it 'the first commandment with promise,' but that it is the first of the second table.

Now, that we are considering the commandments as contained in two tables, and distinguished with respect to their more immediate object, we may farther observe that, though the duties of both tables are enjoined by the authority of God, and consequently are equally binding, so that the obedience which is acceptable in his sight must be so extensive that we must 'have respect to all his commandments;'ⁿ yet the duties of the first table, in which we have to do with God as the more immediate object of them, are to be considered as acts of religious worship, in performing which we not only confess our obligation to obey him, but adore and magnify his divine perfections as the highest end and reason of our obedience. This feature is not included in the idea of the duties which we owe to our neighbour, as contained in the commandments of the second table. These, indeed, are to be religiously observed, not from any circumstance respecting our neighbour, but as duties which we perform in obedience to God.^o—Again, though the principal and most excellent branch of religion consists in our obeying the commandments of the first table; yet our obedience is not only defective, but unacceptable to God, if we neglect to perform those of the second. On the other hand, the performance of the duties of the second table is not sufficient to denominate a person a religious man, who lives in the neglect of those which are contained in the first.—Further, the

i 1 Tim. i. 5. k Rom. xiii. 8. l Luke x. 27. m Eph. vi. 2. n Psal. cxix. 6.

o The former of these are generally styled the elicit acts of religion, the latter imperate.

duties which we owe to our neighbour, as contained in the second table, are, for the most part, to give way to those which we owe to God, as enjoined in the first; especially when they are considered as standing in competition with them. Thus we are obliged, in the fifth commandment, to obey our parents or superiors; yet, if they command us to break the Sabbath, profane the name of God, or attend on such worship as he has not required, we are to disobey them, or to 'obey God rather than men.'^p Accordingly, it is said, 'If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go, and serve other gods; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him.'^q This our Saviour calls 'hating father and mother, wife, children, and brethren,'^r without which we cannot be his disciples. By this language he intends that, if the love which we otherwise owe them be inconsistent with that obedience which he requires of his followers, or if we cannot oblige them, and at the same time perform the duties which we owe to him, the inferior obligation must give way to the superior.

THE DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CIII. *Which is the first commandment?*

ANSWER. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

QUESTION CIV. *What are the duties required in the first commandment?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the first commandment, are the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honouring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him, believing him, trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him, being zealous for him, calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him, with the whole man, being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in any thing he is offended, and walking humbly with him.

The duties required in this commandment, are contained in three general Heads.

1. We are obliged to know God. This supposes that our understanding is rightly informed as to what relates to the divine perfections as displayed in the works of creation and providence, by which we are led into the knowledge of his eternal power and Godhead. This is called the natural knowledge of God. But that knowledge which we are to endeavour to attain, who have a brighter manifestation of his perfections in the gospel, is of a far more excellent and superior nature. For we see in the gospel, the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or behold the perfections of the divine nature as displayed in and through a Mediator. To know God thus, is to possess that knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation; as our Saviour says, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'^s By means of it we know, not only what God is, but our interest in him, and the foundation which we have of our being accepted in his sight.

2. We are farther commanded to acknowledge God, or make a visible profession of our subjection to him, and, in particular, to Christ, as our great Mediator. His name, interest, and glory, should be most dear to us; and we are, on all occasions, to testify that we count it our glory to be his servants, and to make it appear that he is the supreme object of our desire and delight. Thus, the psalmist says, 'I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living;'^t and, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'^u

3. We are farther obliged by this commandment to worship and glorify God, pursuant to what we know and the profession we make of him as the true God and our God. To worship and glorify God, is to ascribe all possible glory and perfection to him, and to have our hearts suitably affected therewith, as sensible of that

p Acts iv. 19.
s John xvii. 3.

q Deut. xiii. 6, 8.
t Psal. cxlii. 5.

r Luke xiv. 26.
u Psal. lxxiii. 25.

infinite distance which we stand at from him. This is considered under several Heads, which contain the substance of what is required in this commandment.—First, we must make God the subject of our daily meditation : calling to mind what he is in himself, and what he is to us, or does for us. This is to be considered as a means to preserve us from sin, and a spur to duty, a motive to holy fear and reverence.—Again, we are to honour, adore, and fear him for his greatness. Thus the psalmist says, ‘Who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.’^x—Further, as God is the best good, and has promised that he will be a God to us ; so he is to be desired, loved, delighted and rejoiced in, and chosen by us. Thus the prophet says, ‘With my soul have I desired thee in the night ;’^y and the church, ‘I sat down under his shadow with great delight ;’^z and the apostle, ‘Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.’^a—Further, as he is a God of truth, we are to believe all that he has spoken ; and, in particular, what he has revealed in his promises or threatenings, relating to mercies which he will bestow, or judgments which he will inflict. Thus our Saviour says, ‘If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ?’^b And it is said that, when ‘Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.’^c—Again, as he is able to save to the uttermost, and faithful in fulfilling all his promises, we are to trust him with all we have from him, and for all those blessings which we hope to receive at his hands. Thus the prophet says, ‘Trust ye in the Lord for ever ; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.’^d And the apostle speaks of his ‘having committed’ all to him,^e as the consequence of what he knew him to be.—Again, when the name, interest, and glory of God are opposed in the world, we are to express an holy zeal for them. Thus the prophet Elijah says, ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts ; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword.’^f As to what concerns our conversation in general, we are to be ‘not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’^g—Further, as he is a God who hears prayer, we are daily to call upon him, ‘O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.’^h—Moreover, as he is the God of all our mercies, we are to thank and praise him for them. Thus the psalmist says, ‘O give thanks unto the Lord ; for he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever.’ⁱ—Further, his sovereignty and dominion over us call for subjection and obedience, and a constant care to please him, and to approve ourselves to him in all things. Thus the apostle says, ‘Submit yourselves to God ;’^k and the psalmist speaks of a person’s ‘cleansing his way, by taking heed thereto according to his word.’^l—Again, as he is an holy, jealous, and sin-hating God, we are to be filled with grief and sorrow of heart when he is offended, either by ourselves or others. Thus Ephraim says, ‘I was ashamed, yea, even confounded ; because I did bear the reproach of my youth.’^m And the psalmist says, ‘Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they,’ that is, the world in general, ‘keep not thy law.’ⁿ—Finally, a sense of our unworthiness and daily infirmities should excite us to ‘walk humbly with God.’ This is enjoined as a necessary duty,^o and is called a being ‘clothed with humility.’^p Thus concerning the duties required in this commandment.

That which may be farther observed is, that it is fitly placed before all the other commandments, because what it enjoins is, from the nature of the thing, necessary to our performing the duties which are required in them. The object of worship must first be known before we can apply ourselves, in a right manner, to perform any duty prescribed, whether respecting God or man.—It may be also farther considered, that it is not an easy matter to keep this commandment, because of the spirituality and vast extent of the duty enjoined, and because of the many graces which are to be exercised by those who would perform it aright. Hence, we ought ear-

x Psal. lxxxix. 6, 7.

b John viii. 46.

f 1 Kings xix. 10.

k James iv. 7.

o Micah vi. 8.

y Isa. xxvi. 9.

c Exod. xiv. 31.

g Rom. xii. 11.

l Psal. cxix. 9.

p 1 Pet. v. 5.

z Cant. ii. 3.

d Isa. xxvi. 4.

h Psal. lxxv. 2.

m Jer. xxxi. 19.

a John xxi. 15.

e 2 Tim. i. 12.

i Psal. cxxxvi. 1.

n Psal. cxix. 136.

nestly to beg of God that our hearts may be set right with him, and inclined and excited by him to perform it. This is a peculiar blessing to be desired and expected from the Holy Spirit. Thus the psalmist says, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.'^q

THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CV. *What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the first commandment, are, Atheism, in denying, or not having a God; Idolatry, in having, or worshipping more gods than one, or any with, or instead of, the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of any thing due to him required in this commandment, ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him, bold and curious searching into his secrets, all profaneness, hatred of God, self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him, in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God, using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means, carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal, lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God, estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God, praying or giving any religious worship to saints, angels, or any other creatures, all compacts, and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions, making men the lords of our faith and conscience, slighting and despising God and his commandments, resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent, and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us, and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.

QUESTION CVI. *What are we especially taught by these words before me in the first commandment?*

ANSWER. These words *before me*, or 'before my face,' in the first commandment, teach us, that God who seeth all things, takes special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god; that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it, as a most impudent provocation, as also to persuade us to do, as in his sight, whatever we do in his service.

THE sins forbidden in this commandment may be reduced to two general Heads, atheism and idolatry.

Atheism.

By atheism men are so far from taking God for their God, that they deny that there is a God, or, at least, that he is what he has revealed himself to be. Thus the wicked man, who is styled 'a fool,' is represented as 'saying in his heart, There is no God.'^r Atheism is either speculative or practical. The former is that which is seated in the minds and consciences of men; who are so far blinded, perverted, and deluded as to think that there is no God. There are, indeed, very few among these who are so bold and profane as to deny this truth when they attend to the dictates of nature, or duly exercise those reasoning faculties with which God has endowed them; by neglecting to do which, they must be reckoned but one remove from brutes. Some, it is true, are ready to wish that there were no God; or, inclined to deny those divine perfections which are essential to him, they cast contempt on his government, or, it may be, deny a providence; which is, in effect, to deny that there is a God. It must be observed, however, that none proceed to this degree of wickedness, till, by a long continuance in sin, they are given up to judicial hardness of heart, and blindness of mind.^s And even these have been forced, at times, to confess that there is a God, with whom is terrible majesty; when he has broken in on their consciences, and filled them with the dreadful apprehensions of his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge.—But where there is one speculative atheist, there are a thousand practical ones, who live without God in the world; and these are described in this Answer, as being guilty of those sins which none who duly consider his divine perfections would venture to commit. To en-

q Psal. cxix. 36.

r Psal. xiv. 1.

s Rom. i. 28; Eph. iv. 17—20.

large on every one of those instances, particularly mentioned in this Answer, in which this sin is supposed to consist, would require a distinct treatise, and be inconsistent with our designed brevity in explaining the ten commandments. All, therefore, that we shall attempt at present, shall be to consider some instances in which practical atheism discovers itself, together with the aggravations of this sin; and then we shall inquire what judgment we are to pass concerning those who complain of atheistical and blasphemous thoughts, and consider whether this be a degree of that atheism which we are speaking of, and what are the causes of this sin, and the remedies against it.

1. We shall first consider the instances in which practical atheism discovers itself. Among these are the following:—To be grossly ignorant, and know nothing of God but the name,—being utter strangers to those perfections whereby he makes himself known to the world; or to entertain carnal conceptions of him, as though he were altogether such an one as ourselves.^t—Never seriously to exercise thoughts about God, though we know, in some measure, what he is. This forgetfulness is a degree of atheism, and will be severely punished by him.^u—To maintain corrupt doctrines and dangerous heresies, subversive of the fundamental articles of faith, and contrary to the divine perfections. Of this kind are those doctrines which militate against his sovereignty and dominion over the wills, consciences, and affections of men; when we conclude that his counsels and determinations may be disannulled or defeated; or when we suppose that he changes, as we do; or when, under a pretence of advancing one perfection, we set aside the glory of another; when, in order to magnify his mercy, we disregard his holiness or justice, and so presume that we shall be happy without being holy; or when we give way to despairing thoughts, from the consideration of his vindictive justice, without improving the displays of his mercy, as set forth in the gospel.—Again, to repine and quarrel at his providence, and pretend to find fault with the dispensations of it; or charge God foolishly, and go about to prescribe laws to him, who is the Governor of the world, and may do what he will with the work of his hands.—To refuse to engage in those acts of religious worship which he has appointed, or to attend on his ordinances, in which we may hope for his presence and blessing.—To behave ourselves, in the conduct of our lives, as though we were not accountable to him, and had no reason to be afraid of his judgments; when we set our affections on other things, and take them off from him; when we are guilty of wilful impenitence and unbelief, and are incorrigible under divine rebukes; when our hearts and lives are estranged from him, as though we desired not the knowledge of his ways; when we resist and grieve his Spirit, are discontented and impatient under his hand, or ascribe that to second causes or to chance which is under the direction of his providence. In these and many other instances, persons are notoriously guilty of practical atheism, which is forbidden in this commandment.

2. We are now to consider the aggravations and dreadful consequences of this sin. It is contrary to the light of nature, and the dictates of conscience, a disregarding of those impressions which God has made of his glory on the souls of men. In those who have been favoured with the revelation of the grace of God in the gospel, in which his perfections have been set forth to the utmost, it is a shutting of our eyes against the light, and casting contempt on that which should raise our admiration, and excite in us the highest esteem of him whom we practically disown and deny.—Again, it is directly opposite to all religion, and entirely inconsistent with it, and opens a door to the greatest degree of licentiousness. To live without God in the world, is to give the reins to our own corruptions. It is not merely a sin of infirmity or inadvertency, but a running in all excess of riot; and therefore the consequence of it must be dreadful; for that which strikes at the very being of God, cannot but expose the sinner to the sorest condemnation.

3. But there are some sins mentioned in this Answer, which contain a degree of practical atheism, and which believers themselves are prone to fall into and complain of, such as forgetfulness of God, unbelief, distrust of his providence, insensibility under judgments, too great a degree of hardness of heart, pride, carnal

^t Psal. l. 21.

^u Psal. ix. 17, and l. 22.

security, discontent and impatience under his dispensations. That believers are subject to these sins may tend very much to discourage them, and make them conclude that they are not in a state of grace ; especially when they find, as sometimes they do, atheistical and blasphemous thoughts suggested to their minds. We must hence inquire what judgment we are to pass concerning those who are ready to charge themselves with practical atheism, especially as to those unbecoming thoughts and conceptions which they sometimes have of the divine Majesty? whether this be altogether inconsistent with the truth of grace, together with the causes of it, and the remedies against it?

It is certain that the best of God's people are sanctified but in part, and therefore are prone to commit those sins which seem to involve a denial, at least, a neglect, of that regard which we ought to have for the divine perfections, and especially when we are followed not only with vain but with blasphemous thoughts, which give great disturbance to us when engaged in holy duties. This state of mind ought to be reckoned a very great affliction, and occasion many searchings of heart ; since sometimes it brings much guilt with it. Yet we are not always to conclude from it that we are in a state of unregeneracy. It is the prevalency of corruption, or the dominion of sin, which is inconsistent with the truth of grace, not the remains of it. A person may have faith, who yet complains of unbelief. He may have a due regard to God, as to what respects the course and tenor of his actions ; and yet, in many instances, be chargeable with forgetfulness of him. He may have a love to him, and yet sometimes be guilty of indiscreet zeal, on the one hand, or of lukewarmness and deadness of heart, on the other. His mind and affections may be sanctified ; and yet he be sometimes followed with atheistical and blasphemous thoughts.—We have instances in scripture of good men, who have spoken not only unadvisedly, but, as we may term it, wickedly with their lips. Thus Job is justly reprov'd by Elihu for charging God with ' finding occasions against him ; putting his feet in the stocks, and marking all his paths ; ' ^x as though his dealings with him had been unjust and severe ; especially when he says at the same time, ' I am clean, and without transgression ; I am innocent ; neither is there iniquity in me. ' ^y Jonah, also, when he was reprov'd by God for his passionate behaviour towards him, vindicated himself, and said, ' I do well to be angry, even unto death. ' ^z These are expressions which savour of a degree of atheism ; and so do those unbecoming conceptions of God whereby our thoughts are sometimes defiled and depraved. But it is one thing to be guilty of this through surprise and the prevalency of temptation, and another thing to have these thoughts indulged by and lodged in us unrepented of.—Moreover, there are some instances in which believers are afflicted with atheistical and blasphemous thoughts, when it is hard to say that they contract guilt by them, or, at least, their being afflicted with them must be reckoned only an infirmity arising from the present imperfect state. It must especially be thus viewed when the thoughts are injected by Satan, and are without the consent of our wills, but treated with the utmost abhorrence, constantly bewailed and resisted with all our might ; more particularly when we take occasion from them to exercise those graces which discover that we have other apprehensions of God than what are suggested at those times when we are hurried by these temptations, and can scarcely say that we have the government of our own thoughts ; especially if we are enabled to say, at such a time as our Saviour did, when unadvisedly tempted by Peter, who was at the time the devil's instrument to persuade him to relinquish the work which he came into the world to perform, ' Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me. ' ^a

Let us now consider the causes of such atheistical and blasphemous thoughts. Sometimes they proceed from a neglect of waiting on God in his ordinances, or from indulging a carnal and stupid frame of spirit in them, and not maintaining that holy reverence, or becoming sense of his all-seeing eye, which we ought always to have. Moreover, there is nothing that has a greater tendency to produce them, than our conversing with those who make religion the subject of their pro-

x Job xxxiii. 10, 11.

y Ver. 9.

z Jonah iv. 9.

a Matt. xvi. 23

fane wit and drollery ; especially if we do this out of choice, and do not at the same time testify a just abhorrence of it.

As for those remedies which are to be made use of to protect against and cure the sinfulness of our thoughts in such instances ; it behoves us to repent of those sins which may have been the occasion of them or have given rise to them. And as it is not in our own power to govern our hearts or affections, or restrain the breakings forth of corruption ; it is necessary for us to commit our souls into Christ's hands, with earnest supplications to him that he would sanctify, regulate, and cleanse our thoughts, and bring us into and keep us in a good frame. We ought also to desire, seek after, and improve all opportunities of conversing with those whose discourse is holy and profitable.^b By this means our affections may be raised, and our thoughts tinged with divine things, which will leave an abiding impression behind them.^c

Idolatry.

We proceed now to consider this commandment as forbidding idolatry. When it is said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods,' the meaning is, 'Thou shalt not worship idols, or set a creature in the place of God, or pay that regard to it which is due to him alone.' Here it may not be inconvenient to consider the difference between idolatry, as it is a breach of the first and of the second commandment. As it is a breach of the first commandment, it contains a giving of divine honour to that which is not God ; but as it is a sin against the second commandment, it is a worshipping of God by the creature, to whom an inferior kind of worship is given. Thus when the Papists worship God by images, supposing them to be an help to their devotion, or a means of performing that worship which they pretend to be given ultimately to God ; or when they ascribe any branch of divine glory to saints or angels ; notwithstanding what they say to exculpate themselves from the breach of the first commandment, they are justly chargeable with the breach of the second. We are here to consider the idolatry more especially which is forbidden in the first commandment. This is either what is more gross, such as that which is found among the heathen ; or that which is more secret, and may be found in the hearts of all, and is discovered by the practice of multitudes of Christians, who profess the utmost detestation of idolatry in the other sense.

1. We shall first consider idolatry in the former sense, together with the rise and progress of it. As to its rise, we may observe, that it proceeded from the ignorance and pride of man, who, though he could not but know, by the light of nature, that there is a God, yet, being ignorant of his perfections, or of what he has revealed himself to be in his word, was disposed to frame those ideas of a God which took their rise from his invention. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.'^d When iniquity abounded in the world, and men withdrew from the ordinances of God, and cast contempt on them, they invented and worshipped new gods. In this manner some suppose Cain and his posterity acted, when 'he went out from the presence of the Lord ;'^e and 'the sons of God,' that is, the church, when they contracted marriages with 'the daughters of men,'^f and joined with them in idolatry ; so that it is no wonder if persons leave the true worship of God, that they should choose to themselves other gods. When men acted thus, God gave them up to judicial blindness ; so that 'they worshipped the host of heaven,'^g as the apostle says the heathen did.

As to the idolatry which was practised among the Israelites, it took its rise from the fond ambition which they had to be like other nations, who were abhorred of God. They counted the religion of the heathen a fashionable religion ; and finding the true worshippers of God to be fewer in number than the rest of the world, so that, as the prophet says, they were 'like a speckled bird,' despised and hated by the heathen 'round about them,'^h they approved and learned the heathen's

^b Mal. iii. 16.
^f Gen. vi. 2.

^c Luke xxiv. 32.
^g Acts vii. 42.

^d Gal. iv. 8.
^h Jer. xii. 9.

^e Gen. iv. 16.

ways. It was this which occasioned Solomon to cleave to them in love ;ⁱ which was not much unlike the argument used by Demetrius and his followers why Diana should be worshipped, namely, ' because all Asia and the world worshipped her.'^k

The devil was permitted, for the trial of the faith of God's people, and as an instance of his righteous judgment on his enemies, to abuse the unthinking part of the world by various signs and lying wonders. Thus we read of prophets, and dreamers of dreams, who gave forth signs and wonders which God sometimes judiciously suffered to come to pass ; whereby many took occasion to ' go after other gods.'^l Antichrist also is said ' to come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.'^m These signs and lying wonders were managed by the craft and covetousness of the priests, who made a gain of them, and amused the common people by them. The heathen oracles, so much spoken of by ancient writers, which gave countenance to their idolatry, are reckoned by some to have been no other than a contrivance of those who had little else but secular interest in view. When they predicted things future, or revealed secrets, they generally did so in doubtful expressions ; so that whether the thing really came to pass or not, the end designed might be answered. Now there was doubtless a hand of Satan in this matter, to harden the world in that idolatry which was then practised by them. The gods they worshipped were as numerous as the countries and kingdoms where idolatry prevailed. Every nation, yea, every city, had its particular god and distinct modes of worship.—Some worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, supposing that their regular motion and influence on earthly bodies was not to be attributed to the all-wise providence of God, but to some intelligent being which resided in them, and gave them that motion and influence on account of which they worshipped them as gods. This worship of the heavenly bodies was practised by some in the early age in which Job lived ;ⁿ and the Israelites were warned against it.^o Afterwards we read of ' idolatrous priests, who burnt incense to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven ;' and dedicated ' horses and chariots to the sun.'^p—Again, others worshipped the earth, and many creatures therein, especially those from which they received more than an ordinary advantage. Thus the Egyptians worshipped the river Nile ; by the overflowing of which their country was rendered fertile. Some who lived in maritime towns worshipped the sea, thinking thereby to prevent an inundation from it. And the Philistines worshipped Dagon ; inasmuch, as living near the sea, it afforded them plenty of fish.—Others worshipped those parts of the earth which they most delighted in ; such as gardens, woods, groves, springs, &c. These they supposed to be inhabited by some gods, who produced the advantages which they received from them ; without regarding the providence of God, to which every thing is to be ascribed, which the earth brings forth for the support and delight of men.—Others supposed that there were particular gods who had the oversight of men, gave success to their undertakings in the various affairs of life, conducted them when travelling by sea or land, gave good or ill success to their secular employments, and preserved them in sickness and health ; and accordingly they paid divine adoration to them.—Others expressed the regard they had to virtue, by worshipping some men after their death, who had signalized themselves by inventing some things which were of common advantage to mankind while they lived. The Romans were so much addicted to this species of idolatry, that some of their emperors, though tyrants and monsters in wickedness whilst they lived, obliged their subjects to perpetuate their memories by worshipping them as gods when they were dead.—Others of the heathen were so stupid that they worshipped stocks and stones, ascribing divinity to them ; and in doing so, they acted below the reason of intelligent creatures. Thus the prophet speaks of their idols as first ' growing in the wood,' then ' framed by the smith,' or carpenter, ' into gods,' and afterwards ' worshipped by them.'^q And the psalmist justly observes, ' They that make them are like unto them ; so is every one that trusteth in them.'^r

i 1 Kin. xi. 2.

n Job xxxi. 26.

r Psal. cxv. 4—7, compared with 8.

k Acts xix. 27.

o Deut. iv. 19.

l Deut. xiii. 1—3.

p 2 Kings xxiii. 5, 11.

m 2 Thess. ii. 9.

q Isa. xlv. 9—17.

We might under this Head consider some things mentioned in scripture in which idolaters not only acted contrary to the dictates of reason, but discovered themselves to be cruel and inhuman in their modes of worship. Thus Baal's worshippers, in Ahab's time, cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them;^s and others made their children pass through the fire, in the worship they paid to Moloch, or the sun, whom the psalmist refers to, when he says, 'They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters.'^t This language, indeed, some think, intends nothing else but that they passed between two fires; so that they were scorched by them. Yet others, with greater reason, suppose that they were enclosed in that brazen idol, and so burnt to death in the most barbarous manner.^u

The use which we ought to make of this doctrine, should be to feel excited by it to bless God for the clear light of the gospel, whereby we are led to turn from dead idols to serve the living and true God. Yet we are to take heed lest we be chargeable with heart-idolatry; whereby we may be said to break this commandment, though in a different way from that in which the heathen did.

2. We are thus led to consider that idolatry which is sometimes found among Christians. Though they abhor the thoughts of giving divine worship to a creature, yet, if they look into their own hearts, they will have reason to charge themselves with those things which are in scripture called idolatry; namely, when they put any thing in the room of God, or love it more than him. This idolatry may be considered in several instances.

Self may be reckoned among those idols which many who make profession of the true religion pay a greater regard to than God. The apostle, speaking concerning the great degeneracy of the world, says, among other things, that 'men should be lovers of their own selves';^x so that self-love turns away the heart from God, and excludes all practical religion. This we may be said to be guilty of; and in respect to it we are chargeable with heart-idolatry.—We are guilty of it when we reject or refuse to give credit to any of the great doctrines contained in divine revelation, unless we are able to comprehend them within the shallow limits of our own understandings. On this account some are inclined to treat the most sacred mysteries of our religion with contempt; and, for the same reason, they might as well deny and disbelieve what is said concerning the infinite perfections of the divine nature, because they cannot be comprehended by us. This is no other than a setting up of our own understanding, which is weak and liable to err, in opposition to the wisdom of God; and, in some respects, a giving superior glory to it.—Again, we are guilty of heart-idolatry, when we are resolute and incorrigible under the various rebukes of providence, and persist in our rebellion against God, notwithstanding the threatenings which he has denounced, or the judgments which he executes, or when our will is obstinately set on those things which are directly contrary to the will of God, and, though we are warned of the danger of this, resolve, notwithstanding, to add rebellion to our iniquities, like the wild ass used to the wilderness, or the swift dromedary traversing her ways, which cannot be easily turned out of her course. In acting thus, the will of man is set in opposition to God; and he is, for this reason, justly chargeable with idolatry.—The same sin discovers itself in our affections, when either they are set on unlawful objects, or immoderately pursue those which would otherwise be lawful; when we love those things which God hates, or covet what he has expressly forbidden, as Achan did the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garment. On this account 'covetousness' is, by the apostle, called 'idolatry.'^y—We may add, that we are chargeable with this sin, when we 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.'^z Thus the apostle speaks of some 'whose god is their belly.'^a As for those things which are otherwise lawful, we may be guilty of idolatry in the immoderate pursuit of them, when they take up too much of our thoughts, time, and concern; when our affections are

s 1 Kings xviii. 28.

t Psal. cvi. 37, 38.

u To this the poet's observation might well be applied, 'Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!' Lucret. de Nat. Rer. lib. i. That human sacrifices were offered, appears from what we read concerning the king of Moab, who 'took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering,' 2 Kings iii. 27.

x 2 Tim. iii. 2.

y Col. iii. 5.

z Rom. xiii. 14.

a Phil. iii. 19.

as much set upon them as if we had nothing better to mind ; when we are not willing to part with them though God calls for them at our hands, and are more cast down at the loss of them than we are when deprived of those spiritual blessings which are of the highest importance. In these instances we may be said to set up self as our idol in opposition to God.—We may add, that there is a more subtle kind of idolatry, whereby self enters into and takes its place in those religious duties which believers are engaged in. Believers are guilty of this when they attempt to perform these duties in their own strength, as though they had a sufficiency in themselves, and had no occasion to depend on the almighty power of God to work in them that which is pleasing in his sight. We are farther guilty of this sin when, through the pride of our hearts, we are apt to applaud ourselves when we have performed some religious duties, and expect to be justified by them ; which is a setting up o. self as an idol in the room of Christ. Lastly, we are guilty of this sin when self is the end designed in what we do in matters of religion, and so rob God of that glory which is due to his name.

There is another idol which is put in the room of God, and that is the world. When the profits, pleasures, or honours of it are thought of with the greatest delight, as though they were our chief good ; when they are pursued with more earnestness than Christ's interest and glory ; when the world not only has the highest place in our affections, but, as it were, engrosses them ; we are guilty of that love of the world which, as the apostle says, is inconsistent with the love of the Father,^b and denotes us guilty of that idolatry which we are now speaking of.—More particularly, we are guilty of this when our thoughts are so much engaged in the pursuit of the world, that we not only grow cold and remiss as to spiritual things, but allow ourselves no time for serious meditations on them, or for conversing with God in secret.—Again, we are guilty of it when the world has our first and last thoughts every day ; when we are so far from following the psalmist's example, who says, ' When I awake, I am still with thee,'^c as considering ourselves under the care of providence, and indebted to God for the mercies which we enjoy, that we are taken up with nothing else but the projects and schemes which we lay for the gaining or increasing of our wealth or worldly condition ; and when this, having been the great business of the day, takes up and engages our wakeful thoughts by night, as though it were the main work and business of life.—Further, we are guilty of this sin when we pursue the world, without depending on God for his blessing to attend our lawful undertakings, and do not consider its good things as his special gift, or the disappointments which attend us in it as ordered by his overruling providence to engage us to walk more closely with him, and to take up our rest in him as our only happiness.—Again, we are guilty of this sin when our hearts are hardened by the world, and grow cold and indifferent in religion, or when it follows and disturbs us in holy duties, and renders us formal in the discharge of them ; when the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world have a tendency to quiet our spirits, and give us full satisfaction, though under spiritual declensions, and destitute of the special presence of God, which is our greatest happiness ; when we fret or repine at the providence of God, under the disappointments we meet with in our secular affairs in the world ; and when we despise the members of Christ, because they are poor in the world, are ashamed of his cross, and refuse to bear reproach for his sake.

There is another instance of heart-idolatry, namely, when we adhere to the dictates of Satan, and regard his suggestions more than the convictions of our own consciences, or the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Satan's design in his temptations is to turn us away from God ; and when we are drawn aside by them, we may be said to obey him rather than God. This is what all are more or less guilty of ; but some are said, in an uncommon degree, to be his servants. Thus the apostle Paul styles the sorcerer, who sought to turn aside the deputy from the faith, ' a child of the devil ;'^d and our Saviour tells the Jews, ' Ye are of your father the devil ; and the lusts of your father ye will do,'^e &c. Satan is also called ' the god of this world,'^f and ' the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'^g Accordingly, he attempts to usurp the throne of God ; and by

b 1 John ii. 15.
e John viii. 44.

c Psal. cxxxix. 18.
f 2 Cor. iv. 4.

d Acts xiii. 10.
g Eph. ii. 2.

doing so, has led a great part of the world after him. As he tempted our Saviour to fall down and worship him,^h though without success, he prevails upon others to do it to their own ruin.—Here it may be observed that he has propagated several doctrines, in opposition to the gospel. Indeed, all those doctrines which are subversive of it, take their rise from him. Thus the apostle speaks of some who, ‘in the latter times, should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’ⁱ This they do when they depart from the way of truth. [See Note S, page 327.]—Again, Satan has sometimes invented modes of worship, which have been observed by some, in imitation of the sacrifices which God had ordained. Whatever pretence there might be of religion in such modes of worship, he doubtless designed by them to set up himself in opposition to God.—Further, he has amused and hardened the hearts of his subjects, by pretended miracles, designed to oppose and lessen the credit of those real miracles which have been wrought to confirm the truth by the finger of God.^k—He has also endeavoured to extirpate the true religion, by raising persecutions against the faithful worshippers of God. This has been his constant practice, so far as he has been permitted, in all ages.—Moreover, he has excited, in some of his subjects, the greatest degree of hatred of God, opposition to him, and rebellion against him. Thus he ‘entered into the heart of Judas;’^l and ‘filled the heart of Ananias, that he lied to the Holy Ghost;’^m and hardened the hearts of others, so that they bade defiance to the Almighty, like Pharaoh, who said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?’ⁿ—Again, he has persuaded many of his subjects to enter into a kind of confederacy with him, and with one another, to promote his wicked designs. This was the case with those wretched Jews, who ‘bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.’^o And we read of others who had ‘made a covenant with death and with hell.’^p The vilest instances of sins of this nature were found among some who used sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and other diabolical practices. These are so horrid crimes, and so contrary to the dictates of human nature, that had we not an account of some in scripture who practised them, we should be ready to think that none were ever guilty of them.

I will not deny that many things which are commonly related concerning witchcraft and sorcery, as practised in later ages, are fabulous and incredible; that some things, said to be done by the power of the devil, may be accounted for by natural causes; and that others are ascribed to it, which are performed by the concealed arts of some who get a livelihood by cheating the unthinking part of mankind. I am far from thinking, however, as some modern writers suggest, that the account we have of witchcraft and sorcery in scripture, is without any manner of foundation. The famous story of the witch of Endor^q is an argument that there were persons, at that time, in the world who practised these arts. It will be objected, I am aware, that she was a cunning woman, who lived by her wits, and deceived Saul by pretending that she used some infernal art, as an expedient to bring him to the speech of Samuel. It may not be amiss, therefore, to inquire into her case.

Let it be observed, then, that it is by no means to be supposed that she raised Samuel from the dead; for it is out of the devil’s power to call the soul of a saint out of heaven, with a design to subserve his interest by doing so, and to set up his kingdom in opposition to Christ’s. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that Samuel should do the devil so much service after his death, who was so great an enemy to him in his life. Besides, he was buried at Ramah;^r and can we think that he should be now raised at Endor? On the other hand, we are not to imagine that it was a mere trick or juggle of the woman, whereby she imposed on Saul; for though, it is true, he did not see a shape, yet he heard a voice, and made a reply to it. Moreover, we read that he had an intimation given him, that Israel should be delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and that he and his sons should be with him the next day, that is, in the state of the dead. But the woman was not cun-

h Matt. iv. 9.

i 1 Tim. iv. 1.

k Exod. viii. 7.

l Luke xxii. 3.

m Acts v. 3.

n Exod. v. 2.

o Acts xxiii. 14.

p Isa. xxviii. 15.

q Mentioned in 1 Sam. xxviii. 7–20.

r 1 Sam. xxv. 1.

ning enough to foretell this ; or if she had guessed that it would be so, she would hardly have ventured to tell Saul such ungrateful tidings ; since if he had lived to see himself cheated, and her prediction confuted, her life would have been endangered. Had it been nothing but a cheat or a juggle, she would rather have told him that he would be safe and victorious ; for had this come to pass, she might have expected a reward ; and had it not, she would have had nothing to fear from him as a just punishment of her impiety. We must suppose, therefore, that she was a professed servant of the devil, and had, as the text says, ‘a familiar spirit.’ By this we are to understand that she conversed with Satan ; who, that he might harden her the more in her sin, and lead others, like Saul, into a credulous, diabolical presumption, might reveal some secrets to her, and, at the same time, either assume the shape, or, at least counterfeit the voice, of Samuel.

Thus concerning those, who, by the practice of these arts, have professed themselves to be in a kind of confederacy with Satan. It is certain no good man ever practised them. Hence, some have found it very difficult to understand the sense of the scripture concerning the cup which was in Benjamin’s sack : ‘Is not this the cup wherein my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?’^s And Joseph himself says, ‘Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?’^t Though Joseph was a prophet, it is certain he was no diviner in the sense in which the word is commonly used in scripture ; nor was this cup an instrument by which he practised any such art. For understanding this scripture, then, we remark that the word which we render ‘to divine,’ denotes, as is observed in the margin, to make trial of or search after, or to discover or find out a matter ; and that, instead of ‘whereby,’ or ‘by which,’ we ought to read ‘concerning which.’ The meaning of the scripture, then, is only this : ‘Is not this the cup in which my Lord drinketh, and concerning which he maketh search?’ As it was the cup in which he drank, if it were lost or stolen, he would soon miss it, and make inquiry to find out the thief, as he now did. And when Joseph says, ‘Wot ye not that such a man as I can divine?’ the meaning is, “Do you think that one who is so diligent and industrious in the management of all those affairs which are incumbent on me, would lose the cup in which I drink, and make no inquiry after it? Did you expect to go undiscovered, when you had such an one as I to deal with, who have not only an inclination, but all the advantages that can be desired, to make search after those who have dealt unjustly by me, as you have done?” Again, ‘to divine’ may signify to prophesy ; and so it may be taken in a good sense as well as in a bad one. Accordingly, when Joseph’s servants speak of him as divining concerning the cup, they consider him as one who had an extraordinary gift from God of revealing secrets. Hence, they might easily conclude that he would, by this means, find out the person who had stolen his cup. This is agreeable to the Egyptian mode of speaking ; for those whom the Hebrews called prophets, the Egyptians called diviners. Joseph uses the same expression when he says, ‘Wot you not that such a man as I could divine?’ as if he had said, ‘Did you not know that I was a prophet, and by this means was advanced to my present honour in Pharaoh’s court?’ So that, whether we take the words in this or in the other sense, it does not follow that he used any arts which were diabolical or unlawful.

Now that we are speaking concerning the arts by which Satan deludes those who, either directly, or by consequence, pay that regard to him which is due only to God, it may farther be inquired what we are to conclude concerning the practice of judicial astrology by those, who, in scripture, are called ‘stargazers,’ as a term of contempt, and whose profession scripture universally condemns. These are, especially in our age, a generation of men, who impose on the weakness of many superstitious and ignorant people, who, by encouraging them, are partakers with them in their sin. The art they pretend to, is not only uncertain, but presumptuous, and involves a contempt of the providence of God, in paying regard to the signs and intimations which they suppose they receive from the stars, concerning future contingent events, or those actions which take their rise from the free-will of man. What I would observe in general concerning this practice is, that we no-

where find in scripture, that the stars were designed to signify the prosperous or adverse circumstances in which men shall be in the world, or to foretell the riches or poverty, sickness or health, which we should experience in our passage through it, or how long we shall continue in it. Our times and circumstances in the world are only in God's hand; and it is in mercy to us that he has concealed these future events from us. We may add, that this art, and those who use it, are very often spoken against in scripture, and that the church is warned against it. Thus God says, 'Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven.'^u Again, 'Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee.'^x Elsewhere, the persons thus described are ranked with 'diviners,' and called 'liars.'^y It may be inquired whether any good men have ever practised this art, though without pretending to have had any intimation from Satan, but only proceeding according to the rules prescribed in the art. But it is not my business to censure men, but things. The best that can be said is, that if any good men have studied or practised it, they have generally blamed themselves for it afterwards, or, at least, confessed the uncertainty and presumption of it. We read of some who, in the time of their ignorance, had addicted themselves to it, who, when it pleased God to convert them, laid it aside, and burned the books whence they learned it.^z

It is objected against what has been said concerning the unlawfulness of judicial astrology, that Moses addicted himself to the study of it, of whom it is said that 'he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.'^a But if, by 'the wisdom of the Egyptians,' we understand, as most expositors do, judicial astrology, Moses might know, but not approve of, or practise this art, which was so much in use among the Egyptians. Perhaps, however, nothing more is intended but his knowing the regular motion of the stars, and the wisdom of God seen in it, without judging by it of future events; and in that case, his knowledge was not only lawful, but commendable. Yet I am apt to think that, by 'the wisdom of the Egyptians,' we are to understand those maxims of state, and the secrets of Pharaoh's court, which he had an opportunity to know, as being a great favourite with him, as Josephus observes, who thinks that Pharaoh designed that he should succeed him in the throne.^b

Having thus considered this commandment as being broken by atheism and idolatry, and considered also the various kinds and degrees of the latter, which is called our having other gods; we may now inquire what is meant by these words "before me" in the first commandment. They are an intimation of the aggravation of the sins forbidden in it. God puts us in mind by them of his all-seeing eye, which ought to deter us from the breach of it; especially when we consider, that inasmuch as he beholds all our actions, he cannot but be exceedingly displeased when we entertain any conceptions of him which tend to question his authority, dethrone his sovereignty, or alienate our affections from him, and set up any thing in competition with him. We ought hence to set the Lord always before us, considering him as the heart-searching God, who is jealous for his own honour, and will not suffer this sin to go unpunished.

^u Jer. x. 2.

^x Isa. xlvii. 13.

^y Chap. xlv. 25.

^z Acts xix. 19.

^a Chap. vii. 22.

^b Vid. Jos. Antiq. lib. ii. cap. v.

[NOTE S. *Doctrines of Devils*.—The word δαιμονια was currently used among the Greeks to signify superior intelligences,—objects of religious worship; and, in conformity with this sense, it is in one passage translated in our version by the word 'strange gods.' Its most common signification among the Greeks, seems to have been, 'the souls of men deified or canonized after death;' and this signification appears to be attached to it in Acts xvii. 18; Rev. ix. 20; 1 Cor. x. 20, 21; and 1 Tim. iv. 1. The phrase in the last of these texts, διδασκαλῆαι δαιμονίων, is of parallel construction with the phrases which occur elsewhere, (Heb. vi. 2; Acts xiii. 12.) βαπτισμῶν διδασκῆς, τῇ διδασκῇ τοῦ Κυρίου, and may fairly be translated 'doctrines concerning deified or canonized men,' just as these may be translated, 'doctrine concerning baptisms,' 'the doctrine concerning the Lord.' The word 'spirits,' too, is employed in the New Testament (1 John iv. 1.) to designate pretenders to inspiration or miraculous gifts. The entire prophecy in 1 Tim. iv. 1—3, therefore, is a graphic description of the peculiar or characteristic features which should early be developed in the great antichristian apostacy; for it enumerates errors by which both the western and the eastern sections of the body

calling itself 'Catholic,' has been eminently characterized,—'departure from the apostolic faith, pretension to infallibility and miraculous powers, the canonizing and worshipping of departed souls, the prohibition of marriage to the clergy, and the encouraging of monasticism, the enjoining of fasts and festivals, and the promoting of courses of cynicism and penance : ' Now the spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing pretenders to authority over the conscience, and doctrines concerning canonized men ; speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ; forbidding to marry [and commanding] to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of those who believe and know the truth.'—ED.]

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CVII. *Which is the second commandment ?*

ANSWER. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

QUESTION CVIII. *What are the duties required in the second commandment ?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religions worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word, particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ, the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word, the administration and receiving of the sacraments, church-government and discipline, the ministry and maintenance thereof, religious fasting, swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him ; as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship, and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

QUESTION CIX. *What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the second commandment, are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any ways approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself, tolerating a false religion, the making any representation of God, of all, or of any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly, in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever, all worshipping of it, or God in it, or by it ; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them, all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others ; though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever, simony, sacrilege, all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

QUESTION CX. *What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment the more to enforce it ?*

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments," are, besides God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom, accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations, and esteeming the observers of it, such as love him, and keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations.

Difference between the First and the Second Commandment.

BEFORE we proceed to consider the matter of this commandment, we shall premise something, in general, concerning the difference between it and the first commandment. The first commandment respects the object of worship ; the second, the manner in which it is to be performed. Accordingly, the former forbids our not owning God to be such an one as he has revealed himself to be in his word, and also the substituting of any creature in his room, or acknowledging it, either directly or by consequence, to be our chief good and happiness ; the latter obliges us to worship God, in such a way as he has prescribed, in opposition to that which takes its rise from our own invention. These two commandments, therefore, being so distinct, we cannot but think the Papists to be chargeable with a very great absurdity, in making the second to be only an appendix to the first, or an explanation of it. The design of their doing so seems to be, that they may exculpate

themselves from the charge of idolatry, in setting up image-worship, which they think to be no crime ; because they are not so stupid as to style the image a god, or make it a supreme object of worship. This commandment, however, in forbidding false worship, is directly contrary to their practice of worshipping God by images.

The method in which this commandment is laid down, is the same with that of several others ; we have an account of the duties required, the sins forbidden, and the reasons annexed to enforce it.

The Duties Enjoined in the Second Commandment.

We shall first consider the duties commanded. These are contained in two Heads.

1. We are under an obligation to observe, or attend upon, such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed. Religious worship is that whereby we address ourselves to God, as a God of infinite perfection ; profess an entire subjection and devotedness to him as our God ; put our trust in him for a supply of all our wants ; and ascribe to him that praise and glory which is his due, as our chief good, most bountiful benefactor, and only portion and happiness. As for the ordinances, our attendance on them depends on a divine command, to which God has annexed a promise of his gracious presence, whereby our expectations are raised that we shall obtain some blessings from him, when we engage in them in a right manner. In this respect they are instituted means of grace, and pledges of that special favour which he designs to bestow on his people. This is that which more especially renders a duty enjoined an ordinance. Accordingly, our Saviour says, ' Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'^c Now, these ordinances are either solitary or social ; such as we are obliged to perform, either in our closets,^d in our families, or in those public assemblies where God is worshipped. They are particularly mentioned in this Answer ; and they are prayer, thanksgiving, reading, preaching and hearing the word, the administration and receiving of the sacraments, to which we may add, praising God by singing. All these will be insisted on in a following Answer, and therefore we pass by them at present.

Now, as these are duties which are daily incumbent on us, so there are other duties or ordinances, which are to be performed only as the necessity of affairs requires. One of these is religious fasting, whereby we express public tokens of mourning and humiliation, and perform other duties corresponding with these, when God is provoked by crying sins, or when his judgments are upon us and our families, or the church of God in general. Thus the prophet Joel, when speaking concerning several desolating judgments to which Israel was exposed, commands them ' to sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly ; and to weep between the porch and the altar ; and say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.'^e This is not to be done at all times ; but only when the providence of God calls for it. Hence, we have no warrant for the observance of annual fasts, when that which was the first occasion of them is removed ; much less for those weeks of fasting which the Papists observe, which they call Lent. No sufficient reason can be assigned why Lent should be observed at the season fixed on by the Papists, rather than at any other time of the year. Nor can their fasting on certain days of the week be vindicated, much less their doing so without joining other religious duties to it ; or their abstaining from some kinds of food, while they indulge themselves in eating others which are equally grateful to the appetite. This is a ludicrous and superstitious way of fasting.—Again, another occasional duty or ordinance, is our setting apart time for thanksgiving to God for deliverances from public or national calamities, or those which more immediately respect ourselves and families. In observing this ordinance, those religious duties are to be performed which tend to express our spiritual joy and thankfulness to God, who is the Author of our deliverances ; and, at the same time, we are to pray that he would enable us to walk

^c Matt. xviii. 20.

^d Chap. vi. 6.

^e Joel ii. 15, 17.

as those who are hereby laid under renewed engagements to be his. Thus the Jews observed some days of thanksgiving for their deliverance from Haman's conspiracy.^f Such public thanksgiving for providential deliverances, is to be religiously observed; and so it differs from that carnal joy which is generally expressed by those who receive mercies, but do not give glory to God, the sole author of them.

But besides these occasional ordinances, there is another mentioned in this Answer, namely, vowing to God. Thus the psalmist says, 'Vow and pay unto the Lord.'^g This language either, more especially, respects God's ancient people entering into a solemn obligation or promise to give something which was to be applied to the support of the public and costly worship which was performed under the ceremonial law, on which account it is said, in the following words, 'Bring presents unto him;' or it may be considered as to the moral reason of the thing, as including our resolution to set apart or apply some portion of our worldly substance, as God has prospered us in our secular affairs, to the maintaining and promoting of his cause and interest in the world. But we ought, at the same time, to devote ourselves to him, whereby we acknowledge his right to us, and all that we have. Thus the apostle says, concerning the churches of Macedonia, not only that they devoted their substance to God, but that they 'gave themselves' also 'unto the Lord.'^h This duty does not include our resolving to do those things which are out of our own power, or that we will exercise those graces which are the special gift of the Spirit of God; but it is rather a dedication of ourselves to him, in hope of obtaining that grace from him which will enable us to perform those duties which are indispensably necessary to salvation, and inseparably connected with it. This is such a vowing to God, as will not have a tendency to ensnare our consciences, or detract from his glory who is alone the Author of all grace. Nor does it contain the least instance of presumption; but is a duty which we ought to perform by faith, to his glory and our own edification.

We might notice another ordinance, mentioned in this Answer; namely, swearing by the name of God. This, as we have elsewhere expressed it, includes a swearing fealty to him, and our consecrating and devoting ourselves to him.ⁱ As to swearing, as a religious duty to be performed in subserviency to civil duties, we shall have occasion to speak of it under the third commandment; and therefore we pass it over at present.

2. We proceed to observe that the religious duties or ordinances which we have noticed, and all others which God has enjoined, are to be kept pure and entire. As we are not to cast off the ordinances of God in general, so we must take heed that we do not, while we perform some, live in the neglect of others; for that is not to keep them entire. Thus private duties are not to shut out those which are social in our families or the public assemblies, nor intrench on that time which ought to be allotted for them; and, on the other hand, it is not sufficient for us to worship God in public, and, at the same time, cast off all secret duties. This reproves the practice of some modern enthusiasts, who pray not, unless moved by the Spirit, as they pretend; and deny their obligation to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Moreover, as we are to keep the ordinances of God entire, we are also to keep them pure, that is, to allow, or practise nothing but what is warranted by the rules which God has given us in his word; in opposition to those who corrupt his worship, by intruding those ordinances into it which are of their own invention, and pretending that, though God has not commanded these, yet the service which we perform, which can be no other than will-worship, will be acceptable to him.

The Sins Forbidden in the Second Commandment.

We now proceed to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. The general scope and design of the commandment, as to the negative part of it, is God's prohibiting all false worship, either in our hearts, or in our outward actions

^f Esth. ix. 20, et seq.

^g Psal. lxxvi. 11.

^h 2 Cor. viii. 5.

ⁱ See more of this in Sect. 'The Covenant of Grace as made with Man,' under Quest. xxxi.

or gestures, whereby we adhere to our own imaginations rather than his revealed will, which is the only rule of instituted worship. The things forbidden in this commandment may be reduced to three Heads.

1. A not attending on the ordinances of God with that holy, humble, and becoming frame of spirit which the solemnity of the duties themselves, or the authority of God enjoining them, or the advantages which we may expect to receive by them, call for. When we do not seriously think what we are going about before we engage in holy duties, or watch over our hearts and affections, or when we worship God in a careless and indifferent manner; we may be said to draw nigh to him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him.

2. We farther break this commandment, when we invent ordinances which God has nowhere in his word commanded; or think to recommend ourselves to him by gestures, or modes of worship, which we have no precedent or example for in the New Testament. This is what is generally called superstition and will-worship. Thus we read in the degenerate age of the church, that 'the statutes of Omri were kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab;'^k referring to that false worship which was practised by them. Here we cannot but observe, that there are many things in which the Papists are chargeable with superstition and will-worship, if not with idolatry. For example, they worship the bread in the sacrament, supposing it to be the real body and blood of Christ, and not merely the sign of him. They understand the words of our Saviour when instituting this ordinance, 'This is my body,'ⁿ in a literal sense, though they ought to be understood in a figurative sense.—Again, they lift up the bread in the sacrament, pretending that their doing so is a real offering of Christ; and, at the same time, the people are obliged to show all possible marks of sorrow, such as beating their breasts, shaking their heads, &c., as though they really saw Christ on the cross. But it is a profaning of the Lord's supper, to say that Christ is really and visibly offered in it by the hands of the priest; and is contrary to what the apostle says of his having been but 'once offered to bear the sins of many.'^m—Moreover, they use several superstitious ceremonies in baptism, which have, indeed, a show of religion, but want a divine sanction, and are no other than an addition to Christ's institution. Thus they use spittle, salt, and cream, besides the water with which the child is to be baptized; and anoint it with oil, and use exorcism, commanding the unclean spirit to depart out of it, and signing it with the sign of the cross; at which they suppose the devil to be so terrified, that he is obliged to leave it, being by this means, as it were, frightened away. The principal reason, however, which they give for their adding this ceremony to Christ's institution, is to signify that the child is hereby obliged to fight manfully under Christ's banner. But this ceremony neither increases nor diminishes the child's obligation; and it is a sign which Christ makes no mention of.—We may mention also their frequent crossing of themselves, as a preservative against sin, and as a means to keep them from the power of the devil, and to render their prayers acceptable in the sight of God; the splendour and magnificence of their churches, and especially the shape and figure of them, as accommodated to that of Solomon's temple, and their situation east and west; also their bowing to the altar, which is placed in the east,—a practice for which there is not the least shadow of argument in scripture, or example in the purest ages of the Church; the ludicrous and unwarrantable ceremonies used in the consecration of churches, and the reverence which every one must show to places thus consecrated, even at other times than that of divine worship. We may add, that there are many superstitious ceremonies in consecrating all the vessels and utensils which are used in their churches. Yea, the very bells are baptized, or, as they express it, consecrated, in order that the devil may be afraid of the sound of them, and keep his distance from those places of worship in which they are fixed. But such charms can be reckoned only the sport of the powers of darkness, or looked on by them with contempt.—Again, the Papists ascribe a divine, yea, a meritorious virtue, to the frequent repeating of the Lord's prayer in Latin, commonly called 'Pater noster,' and the angel's salutation of the Virgin Mary,ⁿ called 'Ave Maria.' The words of this salutation they put a

^k Micah vi. 16.

^l Matt. xxvi. 26.

^m Heb. x. 28.

ⁿ Mentioned in Luke i. 28.

corrupt sense upon, contrary to their proper meaning and the recitation of them; and whether they be understood or not, it is reckoned acceptable service.—We may mention likewise the distinction of garments, and the relative holiness of the persons who wear them, as signified by that distinction. We may mention, too, the canonical hours which are appointed for the performing of divine service; especially if we consider the reason which they allege for the practice, namely, that there was something remarkable done or suffered by Christ at those hours in the day. These things argue them guilty of superstition.—We might take notice also of the many things which they make merchandise of, as consecrated bread, wax-candles, &c. They ascribe to these a spiritual virtue, or some advantage to be received by those who purchase them; and so they advance the price of them. There are also the relics which they call the church's treasure, or those rarities which they purchase at a great rate; though some of the wiser Papists have made but a jest of them.—We pass by, for brevity's sake, many other superstitious ceremonies used by them, and observe only their bowing at the name of Jesus. This practice can hardly be vindicated from the charge of superstition, especially as no extraordinary expression of reverence is made at the mention of those incommunicable attributes of God which are ascribed to him; nor, indeed, do they bow the knee at the mentioning of the word 'Saviour,' 'Christ,' or 'Emmanuel,' or when any other divine characters are given him. The only scripture they make use of to vindicate this practice, is Phil. ii. 10, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' But it is plain that this 'bowing the knee' does not signify a bodily gesture, but only a subjection of soul to Christ, as 'angels, authorities, and powers' are said to be 'made subject unto him.'^o These, indeed, are a very considerable part of the inhabitants of heaven, but they have no knees to bow; and as for 'things under the earth,' that is, the powers of darkness, they do not bow to him in a way of worship, but are subjected to him as conquered enemies.

3. We now proceed to consider that they are guilty of the breach of this commandment, who frame an image of any of the persons of the Godhead, or of any creature in heaven or earth, as a means or help made use of in order to their worshipping God. Here it must be inquired whether the making of images, absolutely or in all respects, be unlawful. It is generally answered that, if pictures representing creatures, either in heaven or earth, be made with no other design but, in an historical way, to propagate the memory of persons and their actions to posterity, the making of them seems not to be a breach of this commandment. But the sin forbidden in it, expressed in those words, 'Making to ourselves the image or likeness of creatures in heaven or earth,' is committed when we design to worship God by the images. Accordingly, the using of bodily gestures to them, such as those which were used in the worship of God, as bowing, uncovering the head, &c., wherein a person designs an act of worship, is idolatry. Even if nothing else is intended but the worshipping of God by the images, the use of them can hardly be excused from at least the appearance of idolatry; so that, according to one of the rules before laid down for understanding the ten commandments, it is to be reckoned a breach of the second commandment; which is what we are now considering.^p—Again, it must be inquired whether it be unlawful to represent any of the persons in the Godhead, by pictures or carved images? We answer, that, God being infinite and incomprehensible, it is impossible to frame any image like him.^q Moreover, he assigns as a reason why Israel should make no image of him, that 'they saw no manner of similitude when he spake to them in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire;' and adds, 'lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image.'^r And the apostle styles the representing of God by an image, an offering the highest affront to him, when he speaks of some who 'changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.'^s But there are some who, though they do not much care to defend the practice of making pictures of God, yet plead for describing an emblem of the Trinity, such as a triangle, with the name Jehovah in the midst of it. Now, I would observe concerning this practice, that if the design

^o 1 Pet. iii. 22.
^r Deut. iv. 15, 16.

^p See page 312.
^s Rom. i. 23.

^q Isa. xl. 18; Chap. xlvi. 5; Acts xvii. 29.

of it be to worship God by the emblem, it is idolatry; but if not, it is unwarrantable, and, indeed, unnecessary; since a Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, is to be understood as revealed in scripture, and not brought to our remembrance by an emblem, which is an ordinance of our own invention. It is farther inquired whether we may not describe our Saviour, as he sometimes is by the Papists, in those things which respect his human nature? whether we may not portray him as an infant in his mother's arms, or as conversing on earth, or hanging on the cross? The Papists not only describe him thus, but adore the image or representation of Christ crucified, which they call a crucifix. But whatever of Christ comes within the reach of the art of man to delineate or describe, is only his human nature, which is not the object of divine adoration; so that the practice of describing him in the way mentioned tends rather to debase, than to give us raised and becoming conceptions of him as such.

As God is sometimes represented as having a body or bodily parts, and as the prophet Daniel describes God the Father as 'the Ancient of days;' some suppose that it is not unlawful for them to make such representations of him by images. But God's being described by the parts of human bodies, is in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, or agreeable to human modes of speaking; according to which the eye signifies wisdom, the arm power, the heart love, &c. We are, notwithstanding these modes of expression, to abstract, in our thoughts, every thing which is carnal or applicable to the creature, when conceiving of God; and therefore not to give occasion to any to think that he is like ourselves, by describing him in such a way. The Papists not only plead for making such images, but set them up in churches, calling them the laymen's books, with a design to instruct them in those things which the images represent. But such a method of instruction is without any warrant from scripture, as well as contrary to the practice of the purest ages of the church; who always thought that the word of God was sufficient to lead them into the knowledge of himself, without making use of a picture for that purpose.— Yet though this colour is put on the practice of setting up such images in churches, there are some of the Papists who plead for the worship of images only with this distinction, that it is a subordinate or a relative worship which they give to them, while, at the same time, the highest worship is given to God only. But they cannot thus exculpate themselves from the charge of idolatry. Indeed, in some of their books of devotion, we find the same expressions used when they address themselves to the creature, as if they were paying divine adoration to God; particularly in the book, which is well known among them, called the Virgin Mary's Psalter, in which her name is often inserted instead of the name of God, which is the highest strain of blasphemy. Thus when it is said, 'O come let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,'^u instead of 'the Lord,' they put 'the Virgin Mary;' and when it is said, 'Have mercy upon me, O God,'^x they pray, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lady,' &c. These expressions cannot be read without detestation; and there are in that book many more of a similar kind. When this has been objected against them as a specimen of their idolatry, all the reply they make is, that the book was written by a private person as an help to devotion, but not established by the authority of the church, which is not to be charged with every absurdity which some of their communion may advance. We reply, that the church of Rome has been very ready to condemn better books, written by those who were not in her communion; while she has never publicly condemned this book, but rather commended it as written with a good design. Besides, there are many blasphemous expressions given to the Virgin Mary, in their Breviaries and Missals, which are used by public authority. Thus she is often addressed in such characters as these,—'the mother of mercy,' 'the gate of heaven,' 'the queen of heaven,' 'the empress of the world;' and sometimes she is desired not only to pray her son to help them, but, by the authority of a mother, to command him to do it. At other times, they desire her to help and save them herself; and accordingly they give her the title of Redeemer and Saviour, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes also they profess to put their trust and confidence in her. Now, if this be not idolatry, where is there any to be found in the world?

t Dan. vii. 9.

u Psal. xciv. 6.

x Psal. li. 1.

We may notice, likewise, that idolatry which is practised by them in their devotion to the images of other saints. Every saint in their calendar is called upon in his turn. Among those, indeed, some were good men, as the martyrs, who refused to be worshipped while on earth; how much soever the Papists worship them now that they are in heaven. But there are others whom the Popes have canonized as saints, who were little better than devils incarnate, while they were upon earth; and others were rebels and traitors to their king and country, and suffered the just reward of their wickedness. Such as these are found among those whom they pay this worship to. There are also others whom they worship as saints, concerning whom it may be much questioned whether there ever were such persons in the world. These may be called fabulous saints; yet images are made to their honour, and prayers directed to them. There are also things worshipped by them which never had life, as the picture of the cross, and many pretended relics of the saints. Upon the whole, therefore, we cannot but think that we have, in this mode of worship, a notorious instance of the breach of the second commandment; and we cannot but conclude that, in rendering this worship, they have apostatized or turned aside from the purity of the gospel.

It may be observed, that the church, for the first three hundred years after Christ, had comparatively but little superstition and no idolatry. But in the fourth century, superstition began to insinuate itself into it. Then it was that the pictures of the martyrs, who had suffered in Christ's cause, were first set up in churches, though without any design of worshipping them; and the setting of them up was not universally approved of. As for image-worship, it was not brought into the church till above seven hundred years after Christ; and then there was a considerable opposition made to it by some. This kind of worship was set up in one reign, and prohibited in another; but afterwards it universally prevailed in the Romish church, when arrived at that height of impiety and idolatry, without opposition, which it maintains at this day.

The Reasons annexed to the Second Commandment.

We now proceed to observe the reasons annexed to this Commandment. These are taken from the consideration of what God is in himself: 'I am the Lord,' or 'Jehovah.' This being a name never given to any creature, is expressive of all his divine perfections, which render him the object of worship, and oblige us to perform that worship which he requires, in such a way as is agreeable to his character. He also styles himself a God to his people: 'I am thy God.' Hence, to set up strange gods, or to worship him in a way not prescribed by him, is a violation of his covenant, as well as not performing the duty we owe to him, and would render us unfit to be owned by him as his people. Moreover, they who thus corrupt themselves, and pervert his worship, are styled haters of him, and therefore can expect nothing but to be dealt with as enemies. This he gives them to understand, in his styling himself 'a jealous,' or sin-revenging God, 'visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.' For understanding this language, let it be considered that, though God does not punish children with eternal destruction for the sins of their immediate parents, yet these often bring temporal judgments on families. Thus all the children of Israel who murmured and despised the good land, so far bare their fathers' iniquity, that they wandered in the wilderness nearly forty years. Again, these judgments fall more heavily on those children who make their parents' sins their own. This was the case of the Jews. Hence, our Saviour tells them that 'all the blood that was shed upon the earth, should come upon them, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.'^y They approved and committed the same sins which their fathers were guilty of, and consequently are said to have 'filled up the measure of their sins.' Hence, the judgments of God which they exposed themselves to, were most terrible. Further, whatever temporal judgments may be inflicted on children for their parents' sins, shall be sanctified, and redound to their spiritual advantage, as

well as end in their everlasting happiness, if they do not follow their bad example. Accordingly, it is farther observed that God ‘shows mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments.’ These are very great motives and inducements to enforce the observance of all God’s commandments, and this in particular.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXI. *Which is the third commandment ?*

ANSWER. The third commandment is, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

QUESTION CXII. *What is required in the third commandment ?*

ANSWER. The third commandment requires, that the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, writing, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others.

QUESTION CXIII. *What are the sins forbidaen in the third commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God’s name as is required, and the abuse of it, in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works ; by blasphemy, perjury ; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots ; violating our oaths and vows, if lawful, and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful, murmuring and quarrelling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God’s decrees and providences, misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines, abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices, the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any ways opposing of God’s truth, grace, and ways, making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends ; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by uncomfortable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walkings, or backsliding from it.

QUESTION CXIV. *What are the reasons annexed to the third commandment ?*

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the third commandment in these words, “the Lord thy God,” and “for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain,” are, because he is the Lord and our God, and therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us, especially, because he is so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.

General View of the Third Commandment.

As the second commandment respects the manner in which God is to be worshipped, agreeably to his revealed will ; in this we are commanded to worship him with that frame of spirit which is suitable to the greatness of the work, and the majesty of him with whom we have to do. By the name of God we are to understand all those things whereby he is pleased to make himself known ; and these are his names, titles, attributes, words, and works. The attributes of God have been largely insisted on under the Question, ‘What is God ?’^z His names and titles have also been considered, as belonging to all the persons in the Godhead, in proving that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father.^a His word is that in which the glory contained in his names, titles, and attributes, is set forth in the most glorious manner. Thus the psalmist says, ‘Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name ;’^b or, thou hast given a brighter discovery of thyself in thy word, than thou hast done in any thing else by which thou hast made thyself known to thy creatures. As for the works of God, whether of nature or of grace, they are designed to lead us into the knowledge of his power, wisdom, goodness, holiness, and faithfulness, which are eminently glorified in all that he does. Now, this commandment respects our having a due regard to all those ways whereby he

^z Quest. iv.

^a Quest. xi.

^b Psal. cxxxviii. 2.

makes himself known ; and contains a prohibition of every thing which may tend to cast the least dishonour upon them.

The Duties Enjoined in the Third Commandment.

Agreeably to the method in which we are led to discuss the commandments, we shall first observe the duties enjoined. The third commandment supposes that it is an indispensable duty for us to make mention of the name of God. Since he has given us some discoveries of himself, by what means soever he has done it, it would be an instance of the highest contempt of the greatest privilege for us to express no regard to them. But this those may be said practically to do, who make no profession of religion, and desire not to be instructed in those things which relate to the name and glory of God. Such conduct argues a person to be abandoned to the greatest wickedness, and to live without God in the world.

Now there are several duties mentioned in this Answer, in which we are said to make use of God's name. These duties are performed, in particular, when we attend on his ordinances, namely, the word, sacraments, and prayer ; and when we take religious oaths, and make solemn vows ; and these duties are, doubtless, to be performed with the utmost reverence. We have many instances, in scripture, of holy men who, when they have drawn nigh to him in prayer, have adored his divine perfections with a becoming humility. Thus Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, addresses himself to God : ' There is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart.'^c Jacob, when wrestling with God in prayer, says, ' O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee ; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.'^d Hezekiah expresses himself thus in prayer, ' O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.'^e Daniel, in prayer, styles him, ' the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.'^f Abraham, when standing before the Lord, and pleading in behalf of Sodom, says, ' Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.'^g And the inhabitants of heaven, who are nearest the throne of God, are represented as worshipping him with the greatest reverence, ' casting their crowns before the throne,' in token of their being unworthy of the honour that they are advanced to, and saying, ' Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ;'^h which is to be understood of him, exclusive of all others. Now, as this reverence is to be expressed when we ask any thing at the hand of God, by a parity of reason it ought to be expressed in any other religious duty, on which he has made some impressions of his glory.

It may be inquired whether this reverence is consistent with that boldness which believers are said to have in prayer, when they are exhorted to ' come boldly unto the throne of grace,'ⁱ and to ' have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus.'^k But the word there translated ' boldness,'^l may be rendered a liberty of speech. Though he is infinitely above us, and a God of infinite holiness and purity, and therefore has the utmost abhorrence of sin, which we have reason to charge ourselves with ; yet we are encouraged to come to him, as sitting on a throne of grace, whence he displays his glory as a sin-pardoning God, who otherwise appears in his jealousy, as a sin-revenging Judge. This ' boldness,' then, is nothing else but our making use of that liberty which God gives us to come into his presence with hope of being accepted in his sight, in and through a Mediator.

We might farther observe that, as we are to express an holy reverence in drawing nigh to God in all religious duties, so we ought not to think of any of his works,

c 1 Kings viii. 23.

f Dan. ix. 4.

i Heb. iv. 16.

d Gen. xxxii. 9, 10.

g Gen. xviii. 27.

k Chap. x. 19.

e 2 Kings xix. 15.

h Rev. iv. 10, 11.

l Παρρησία.

but with a due regard to, and the highest veneration of, his glory, shining forth in them. Thus it is said, 'Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.'^m This reverence is to be expressed in our meditations, words, and writings; so that we should never think or treat of divine subjects, but in an holy manner, —we should never speak of any thing by which God manifests his glory, but with a design to beget in ourselves and others a reverential fear of him, and the highest esteem for him.

The Sins Forbidden in the Third Commandment.

We are now to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. In general, we violate it by not using the name of God in such a way as is required. This includes various particulars.

I. Persons break this commandment by not making any profession of religion, being afraid or ashamed to own that in which the name of God is so much concerned. Persons, indeed, do not usually arrive at this height of wickedness at once; but the mind is alienated from God and his worship by degrees. There is first a great deal of lukewarmness, formality, and hypocrisy, reigning in the heart of man; so that if they attend on the ordinances of God's worship, it is with great indifference, with many prejudices, and with such a frame of spirit as savours more of profaneness than true religion. Afterwards they are ashamed of Christ and his cause, being influenced by the reproach which is cast on it in the world. Thus the Jews pretended, concerning Christianity, that it was 'a sect everywhere spoken against.'ⁿ And 'Demas forsook' the apostle, 'having loved this present world;'^o being more concerned for his reputation in it, than for Christ's interest. Eventually such persons cast off all public worship; and their doing so is generally attended with a seared conscience, and running into all excess of riot.

II. Persons take the name of God in vain, when, though they make a profession of religion, yet it is not in such a way as God has required. This is done by treating in an unbecoming manner his titles, attributes, or any ordinances or works in which he makes himself known. It is done when we speak of the divine perfections, and, at the same time, have no just ideas of what is intended by them; or when we use the name of God with a vanity or levity of spirit, and mention sacred things in a common way, whereby we may be said to profane them; or when we superstitiously pay a kind of veneration to the sound of words, relating to divine matters, but regard not the thing signified by them. This is using the name of God in such a way as he has not required, and consequently taking it in vain.

III. The name of God is taken in vain by blasphemy. This is a thinking or speaking reproachfully of him, as though he had no right to the glory which belongs to his name; and is, in effect, a cursing him in our hearts, and offering the greatest injury which can be done to a God of infinite perfection. This, though it is not a real lessening of his essential glory, yet argues the greatest malignity, and the highest degree of impiety in those who are guilty of it. It was so great a crime, that, by God's command, it was punished with death.^p

IV. This commandment is broken by not using religious oaths in a right manner, or by violating them; and, on the other hand, by all sinful and profane oaths and cursing.

1. By not using religious oaths in a right manner. It is certain, that we are, upon extraordinary occasions, to make mention of the name of God by solemn oaths; in which we appeal to him as a God of truth, the searcher of hearts, and the avenger of falsehood. That this is a duty, appears from the fact that we have various instances, in scripture, of God's condescending to confirm what he has spoken by an oath; wherein he appeals to his own perfections for the confirmation of our faith. Thus he is represented as 'swearing by himself,' and 'by his holiness.'^q Again, there are several examples and commands, in scripture, which make it our duty to appeal to God, on some occasions, by solemn oaths. Thus it

^m Job xxxvi. 24.
^p Levit. xxiv. 16.

ⁿ Acts xxviii. 22.
^q Gen. xxii. 16, 17. Psal. lxxix. 35.

^o 2 Tim. iv. 10.

is said, 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name;' ^r and 'To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'^s But we must observe that there is a vast difference between God's swearing by himself, or by any of his perfections, and man's swearing by him. When God swears by himself, his doing so is a display of the glory of his perfections, as a God that cannot lie; but when man swears by him, his doing so is an act of religious worship, containing an acknowledgment of God's perfections, and an appeal to him as a God of truth, and as the avenger of a lie. Hence, an oath is not to be taken but in matters of great importance, which cannot be decided without it; and being an act of religious worship, it ought to be performed in the most solemn manner; otherwise we profane the name of God, and so violate this commandment. This respects not so much the form used in swearing, as the levity of spirit with which the act is done, or our pretending to confirm by our oath that which is false.

The form used in solemn oaths has been various. We read of some ceremonies used in swearing which were only occasional. Thus when Jacob and Laban took a solemn oath to each other at their parting, a pillar was erected, and a heap of stones gathered together; and they both eat upon the heap, and 'sware by the God of Abraham and Nahor, and the Fear of Isaac,' that they would do no injury to each other.^t Also we read that, when Abraham made his servant swear that he would take a wife for Isaac from among his kindred, and not out of the land where he dwelt, he ordered him to 'put his hand under his thigh.'^u This form of swearing seemed to be an appeal to God, as, having promised that his seed should be increased and multiplied, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; which was a circumstance well-adapted to the matter and occasion of the oath, namely, that he should provide such a wife for Isaac as God approved of. The common form of swearing used of old, seems to have been by lifting up the hand to heaven, thereby signifying an appeal to God, whose throne is there. Accordingly, the lifting up of the hand to heaven imports the same thing as to swear, according to the scripture-mode of speaking.^x In this manner Abraham sware,^y and the angel which appeared to John;^z and this is, undoubtedly, a very good and justifiable form of swearing, and is used in some Protestant countries even at this day. As to the form used by us in public solemn oaths, namely, laying the hand on the bible, or on the gospels, and kissing the book, it is nowhere warranted by scripture, and therefore is not so eligible as that of lifting up the hand. Yet because it is the common legal form used among us, it is rather to be complied with than that the duty should be neglected; because, as has been but now observed, some forms of swearing are said to have been used in scripture, and not re-proved, which were of men's invention. The thing principally to be looked at in an oath, is the solemn appeal made in it to God. Hence, it is the frame of spirit with which this is done, which is chiefly to be regarded; and what we have promised to do, is religiously to be observed, that so our oaths may not be violated.

The objections against the use of religious oaths, are principally taken from two or three scriptures, not rightly understood, in which they seem to be forbidden. Thus our Saviour says, 'I say unto you, Swear not at all;'^a and the apostle James speaks to the same purpose.^b It is farther objected that the prophet speaks of swearing as a national sin, when he says, 'Because of swearing the land mourneth.'^c But in these scriptures it is profane swearing which is forbidden, whereby persons make use of the name of God in a light and trifling manner to confirm what they say, or it is swearing by creatures, as the heaven, the earth, or any creature in them. The texts in question do not forbid swearing as a religious appeal to God in a solemn manner, for the confirming of what we assert. When the prophet speaks of 'the land mourning because of swearing,' his words may be rendered, as in the margin of our bibles, 'because of cursing the land mourneth;' intimating that it was a custom among them to imprecate the wrath of God against one another, which was a sin highly provoking to the Majesty of heaven. Besides,

r Deut. vi. 13.

x Deut. xxxii. 40.

b James v. 12.

s Isa. xlv. 23.

y Gen. xiv. 22, 23.

c Jer. xxiii. 10.

t Gen. xxxi. 45—53.

z Rev. x. 5.

u Chap. xxiv. 2, 3, 4.

a Matt. v. 34.

it appears by what is said in the words immediately following, that the prophet is speaking of profane cursing or swearing, 'for both prophet and priest are profane.' The people of all ranks and degrees were profane; the prophets and priests, by abusing the sacred mysteries; and the people, in their common discourse, using oaths and curses; for which things the land mourned. This is the plain sense of that scripture; so that no argument can be drawn from it to prove that solemn and religious oaths are unlawful. It is, indeed, unlawful to swear by creatures, as is observed in the scriptures just mentioned; for they are not omniscient, and therefore not to be appealed to for the deciding of matters which are known to none but ourselves and the searcher of hearts. Nor are they to be reckoned avengers of the cause of injured truth; for they have not a sovereignty over man, or a right to judge and punish him in such a way as God has, and to whom alone belongs the work of judging and punishing. Hence, to swear by their name, is to give them a branch of his glory, and consequently to take his name in vain.

2. This commandment is broken by violating religious oaths, either those which are assertory or those which are promissary. When men assert that for truth which is uncertain, especially if they know it to be false, and so design to deceive, they break this commandment. As for promissary oaths, they contain an appeal to God concerning some things to be done by us, conducive to the good of others. Now, we are guilty of the breach of this commandment when we assert a thing, without implying the condition which ought to be contained in it, that if God will, or he be pleased to enable us, we will do it. This the apostle particularly mentions, when he blames those who say, 'To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas they know not what shall be on the morrow;' and therefore, they 'ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.'^d—Again, we break this commandment when we promise a thing which is out of our power to perform; and, much more, when we do not design to perform it.—Further, we break it when we promise a thing which is in itself unlawful; as the Jews did, who 'bound themselves under a curse, that they would not eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.'^e If we have obliged ourselves by an oath to perform that which is unlawful, as we sin in making the promise, so we should sin in fulfilling it. There are, however, some cases in which persons may not perform what they have sworn to do, and yet not be guilty of perjury, or violation of their oaths. One of these cases is when they have used their utmost endeavours to fulfil what they have promised to do, but cannot accomplish it. It must be observed, indeed, that if the thing promised was absolutely out of their power when the promise was made, the oath, as we just now observed, was unlawful. But suppose that the thing was in their power when they promised it, and that an unforeseen providence has put it out of their power at present to perform it, though they have used their utmost endeavours to do so, they are not chargeable with the guilt of perjury. If, on the other hand, we have promised to do a thing which is for the advantage of another, but now see reason to alter our mind, apprehending that some detriment will accrue to ourselves; we must, notwithstanding, fulfil our promise. Thus the psalmist says, 'He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.'^f Yet if the person to whom we made the promise, who is to receive the advantage by our fulfilling it, is willing to discharge us from our obligation, we may omit to do it, and not be guilty of perjury. Here it might be inquired whether we are always obliged to fulfil a promise extorted from us by violence. It is generally supposed by divines that we are not. Yet the person can hardly be excused from sin in making such a promise, when he designs not to perform it, though some small degree of force or threatening were used; especially as the will cannot be obliged to consent, or the tongue to utter the promise. We may add, that they are guilty of the breach of this commandment, how much soever they may think themselves guiltless, who use equivocations, or mental reservations, in taking solemn and religious oaths. Thus the Papists make no scruple of swearing to support the government under which they live, and yet take the first opportunity which offers to subvert it, pretending that they swore to support it as it stood

^d James iv. 13, 15.

Acts xxii. 12.

^f Psal. xv. 4.

before the Reformation. Or they swear allegiance to their sovereign, and yet do what they can to dethrone him, and have this mental reservation, that they intended only to do it for the present, till they should have a convenient opportunity to join in a successful rebellion. By this means they break through the solemn tie of religious oaths, elude the law, and impose upon the common sense of mankind, in such a way as even the heathen themselves are afraid and ashamed to do.

3. This farther leads us to consider this commandment as broken by swearing profanely; namely, when we make use of the name of God, and pretend to confirm what we assert by an appeal to him, and, at the same time, are far from doing so in a religious manner. This many do who give vent to their passions by profane swearing, by invoking the name of God upon light and trifling occasions, without that due regard which ought always to be paid to his divine majesty. Under this Head we may observe, that cursing is a vile sin, whether a man imprecates the wrath of God on himself or on others. They who curse themselves do, in effect, pray that God would hasten their everlasting destruction; as though their damnation slumbered, or as if it were a thing to be wished for. They do that which the devils themselves would not venture to do. And to curse others is to put up a profane wicked prayer to God, to pour out his vengeance upon them. This is the highest affront to him; as though the vials of his wrath were to be emptied on their fellow-men when they pleased, to satisfy their passionate revenge against them. It also includes vile uncharitableness towards those whom we are commanded to love as ourselves.^g And how contrary is it to that golden rule laid down by our Saviour, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them?'^h Thus we break this commandment by perjury or profane swearing. We may add, that it is notoriously broken by sinful vows; either when we resolve or determine to do what is unlawful, or bring ourselves under solemn engagements to do that which is lawful, in our own strength, without dependence on the grace of God in Christ.

4. It is farther observed in this Answer, that men take the name of God in vain, by sinful lots. This subject, however, needs explanation. Let it be considered, then, that when lots were an ordinance, by which God in an extraordinary manner determined things which were before unknown, they being an instituted means of appealing to him for that end, as in the case of Achan and others,ⁱ were not to be used in a common way; for to have used them so would have been a profaning of a sacred institution. But as this extraordinary ordinance has now ceased, it does not seem unlawful, so as to be an instance of profaneness, to make use of lots in civil matters; provided we do not consider them as an ordinance which God has appointed, in which we think we have ground to expect his immediate interposition, and to depend upon it as if it were a divine oracle. In this view it would be unlawful, at present, to use lots in any respect whatsoever.

5. Persons are said to break this commandment by murmuring, quarrelling at, curiously prying into, and misapplying God's decrees or providences, or perverting what he has revealed in his word. In other words, we break it when we apply things sacred to profane uses, and have not a due regard to the glory of God contained in them; or when we pervert scripture, by making use of its sacred expressions in our common discourse, as some make the scripture the subject of their profane wit and drollery. This conduct is certainly a taking of God's name in vain. It is added, that we are guilty of this sin by maintaining false doctrines, that is, when we pretend that any doctrine is from God, when it is not, or that he makes himself known by it, when it is altogether disowned by him.

6. This commandment is farther broken, by making use of God's name as a charm; as when the writing, or pronouncing of some name of God, is pretended to be an expedient to heal diseases, or drive away evil spirits. This is a great instance of profaneness, and that which he abhors.

7. This commandment is farther broken, by reviling or opposing God's truth, grace, and ways; whereby we cast contempt on that which is most sacred, and lightly esteem that which he sets such a value on, and makes himself known by.

^g Matt. xxii. 39.

^h Chap. vii. 12.

ⁱ Josh. vii. 13, 14; Acts i. 26.

We may add, that this is done by hypocrisy and sinister ends in religion, whereby we walk so as to be an offence to others, and backslide from the ways of God. This is an abuse of that which ought to be our glory, and a disregarding of that whereby God manifests his name and glory to the world.

The Reasons Annexed to the Third Commandment.

We are now to consider the reasons annexed to the third commandment. These are taken from the consideration of what God is in himself, as he is the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah; whereby he puts us in mind of his sovereignty over us, and his undoubted right to obedience from us; and intimates that his excellency should fill us with the greatest reverence and humility, when we think or speak of any thing by which he makes himself known. Moreover, he reveals himself to his people as their God, that so his greatness should not confound us, or his dread, as an absolute God whom we have offended, make us despair of being accepted in his sight. Hence, we are to look upon him as our reconciled God and Father in Christ; which is the highest motive to obedience.

Again, the observance of this commandment is farther enforced by a threatening denounced against those who break it; concerning whom it is said, that 'the Lord will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain.' This implies that there will be a judgment, a reckoning day, when all shall be called to an account; and that it shall be known whether they are guilty, or not guilty. It is farther observed, that the profaning of God's name is a sin which includes a great weight of guilt, and renders the sinner liable to punishment in proportion to it. Accordingly, God is said not to hold them guiltless, or they shall not escape punishment from him, though they may, and often do, escape punishment from men. There are many instances of the profanation of the name of God, which no laws of man can reach; as when we attend on his ordinances without that inward purity of heart, and those high and becoming thoughts of him, which we ought always to entertain. On the other hand, human laws against the open profaning of the name of God are not severe enough to deter men from it; and if they are, they are seldom put in execution. This is one reason why we behold the name of God so openly blasphemed, while this iniquity goes unpunished by men. Yet such as are guilty of it are to expect that God will follow them with the tokens of his displeasure, sometimes with temporal, at other times with spiritual judgments. And that he will do so is assigned as a reason why we ought to make mention of the name of God, or of every thing whereby he makes himself known in such a way that we may glorify him.

THE SABBATIC INSTITUTION.

QUESTION CXV. *Which is the fourth commandment?*

ANSWER. The fourth commandment is, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

QUESTION CXVI. *What is required in the fourth commandment?*

ANSWER. The fourth commandment requireth of all men, the sanctifying, or keeping holy to God, such set time as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament, called the Lord's day.

General Import of the Fourth Commandment.

In this commandment it is supposed, that God is the sovereign Lord of our time; which is to be improved by us, to the best purposes, as he shall direct. As there

are some special seasons which he has appointed for the exercise of religious worship, these are called holy days; and as we are to abstain from our secular employments in them and engage in religious duties, they are called sabbaths; and that more especially, because they are sanctified by God for his service. These are considered, more generally, as including all those set times which God has appointed in his word; and that they include these is implied in the moral reason of this commandment. Hence, if he was pleased to institute, as he did under the ceremonial law, various sabbaths, or days appointed for rest, and the performance of religious worship, his people were obliged to observe them. I take the meaning of this commandment, then, to be, 'Remember a sabbath day, or every sabbath day, or every day, which God hath sanctified for that end, to keep it holy;' and then follows the particular intimation of the weekly sabbath. This, as is observed in the Answer we are explaining, was the seventh day of the week, from the beginning of the world, to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since. The latter is the Christian sabbath, and, in the New Testament, is called the Lord's day.

The Nature of the Sabbatic Institution.

We shall here inquire—since the fourth commandment is contained in the decalogue, which is an abstract of the moral law—whether we are obliged to observe the sabbath by the law of nature, or by some positive law. For understanding this, let it be premised that some laws are moral by way of eminence, or, in the highest sense, as distinguished from all positive laws; and that others may be called moral-positive, that is, the laws are positive, while there is, at the same time, some moral reason annexed to enforce our obedience to them. This moral reason is either what is founded in the sovereignty of God commanding, as is the case in all positive laws, which, in this respect, are moral, though they could not be known without a divine revelation; or else positive laws may have a moral circumstance annexed to them to engage us to obedience, taken from some glory which redounds to God or good to ourselves by the observance of them, or from some other reason assigned by God. For example, the reason annexed to the fourth commandment is taken from God's resting from the work of creation on the seventh day, and its being sanctified for our performing religious duties.

1. We shall consider first in what respects the sabbath is moral in the highest and most proper sense of the word. Here we shall lay down the following propositions, which may be considered in their respective connection.—First, it is a branch of the moral law, that God should be worshipped. This is founded in his divine perfections, in the relation we stand in to him, and in the consideration of our being intelligent creatures, capable of worship.—Again, the moral law obliges us to perform social worship. This appears from the fact that man, as a creature, is capable of society, and is naturally inclined and disposed to it. That he is so, we cannot but know, when we look into ourselves, and consider the disposition of all intelligent creatures, leading them together with ourselves to this end; so that without any positive law to direct us, we should be naturally inclined to converse with one another.—Further, as man is a creature designed to worship God, as the law of nature suggests; so it appears, from the same law, that he is obliged to perform social worship. For, if we are obliged to converse with one another, and thereby to be helpful to one another, in other respects; certainly we are obliged by the same law, to converse with one another about divine matters, to be helpful to one another in them, and to express our united concurrence in those things which relate to the glory of God.—Again, the law of nature farther suggests that as the whole of our business in this world is not included in that of society, which is rather to be occasional than stated; and as there are other secular employments which we are to be engaged in, in which we do not converse with others; so we are not to spend our whole time in public or social worship. From these premises, then, it follows that some stated times are to be appointed for public and social worship. Now, it is agreeable to the law of nature, that God, who is the sovereign Lord of our time, as well as the object of social worship, should appoint these times; that is, that he

should ordain a sabbath, or what proportion of time he pleases, for us to perform those religious duties which he enjoins. These considerations relating to our observance of the sabbath, are purely moral and not positive.

2. We shall now show in what respects the sabbath is positive, and not moral in the highest and most proper sense of the word. Here let it be considered that it is the result of a positive law, that one proportion of time should be observed for a sabbath rather than another; namely, that it should be a seventh, rather than a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth part of our time. For this point could not have been known by the light of nature, any more than the other branches of instituted worship that are to be performed. Hence, whether it be the seventh day in the week, or the first, which we are to observe, the appointment of it being founded in the divine will, we conclude it to be a positive law. This we are obliged to assert that we may guard against two extremes, namely, that of those who deny the sabbath to have any thing of a moral nature contained in it; and that of others who suppose that there is no idea of a positive law in it. That, in some respects, the fourth commandment is a branch of the moral law, may be proved by various arguments.—In particular, it is inserted, among other commandments which are moral, and which were proclaimed by the voice of God from mount Sinai. But the ceremonial and judicial laws were not so proclaimed; they were given by divine inspiration: ‘These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more,’^k namely, at that time. Moreover, they were written on two tables, with the finger of God, which none of the other laws were; and were laid up in the ark before the Lord.^l Now, these circumstances denote the dignity and perpetuity of these laws, above all which were ceremonial, judicial, or merely positive.—Again, the sabbath was not only enjoined to be observed by the Israelites, who were in covenant with God, together with their servants, who were made proselytes to their religion, and were obliged to observe the ceremonial and other positive laws; but it was also to be observed by the stranger within their gates, namely, the heathen, who dwelt among them, who were not in covenant with God, and did not observe the ceremonial law. These were obliged to obey the sabbath, it being, in many respects, a branch of the moral law.—Further, if the observance of the sabbath had been a duty of the ceremonial, and in no respects of the moral law, it would have been wholly abolished at the death of Christ. But, though then the day was altered, yet there was still a sabbath observed after his resurrection, even when the ceremonial law was no longer in force.—Moreover, the weekly sabbath is distinguished from all the ceremonial festivals, which are also called sabbaths; for God lays a special claim to it, as his own day. Hence, it is called, in this commandment, ‘the sabbath of the Lord thy God;’ and it is styled, ‘his holy day,’^m by way of eminence, to distinguish it from other days which he has appointed to be, in other respects, devoted to his service; and, when changed, it is called ‘the Lord’s day,’ⁿ which is a peculiar honour put upon it. For these reasons, we conclude that the sabbath has in it something moral, and is not a part of the ceremonial law.

It is objected that the sabbath is included, by the apostle, among the ceremonial laws, which were designed to be abrogated under the gospel-dispensation; and therefore he says, ‘Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.’^o But by ‘the sabbath-days,’ which are ‘a shadow of things to come,’ we are to understand the Jewish festivals, such as the new-moons, the passover, pentecost, the feast of tabernacles, &c., which are often called sabbaths; wherein holy convocations were held. Hence, when the apostle says, ‘Let no man judge you’ in respect of this matter, he means, let none have occasion to reprove you for your observing those days which were merely ceremonial, and the design of which was to typify the gospel-rest. That the apostle does not mean the weekly sabbath, is plain; for if he did he would contradict his own practice, and that of the churches in his day, who observed

k Deut. v. 22.
n Rev. i. 10.

l Exod. xxxi. 18.
o Col. ii. 16, 17.

m Isa. lviii. 13.

it. The other sabbaths, however, were abolished, together with the ceremonial law. Moreover, that he intends no more than the ceremonial sabbaths, or Jewish festivals, is evident from what follows, 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink,' as well as 'in respect of an holy day,' &c. Here he does not mean, let no one have reason to judge or condemn you for gluttony or drunkenness; but he means, let no man judge or condemn you for your abstaining from several sorts of meat, forbidden by the ceremonial law; and he thus intimates that the distinction of meats is removed under the gospel-dispensation. Now, it follows that the ceremonial sabbaths, or holy days, are taken away; which are intended by 'the sabbath day,' in that place, and not the weekly sabbath. Hence, our translation rightly renders it, 'the sabbath days,' not the sabbath day. Or if it ought to be rendered 'the sabbath day,' or the weekly sabbath, because it is distinguished from the holy days previously mentioned; then he means the seventh-day-sabbath, which was abolished, together with the ceremonial law, in opposition to the Lord's day. How far this seventh-day-sabbath was a sign or shadow of good things to come, will be considered in our reply to the next objection.

It is farther objected by those who pretend that the sabbath is a branch of the ceremonial law, that it is said, 'The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever,'^p &c. But whenever the weekly sabbath has any idea annexed to it corresponding to that of the ceremonial law, as when, in this scripture, it is said to be 'a sign' between God and Israel, we are to understand only that there was a ceremonial accommodation annexed to it, as an ordinance for their faith in particular, signifying the gospel rest. This signification was annexed to it, not from the beginning, but when it was given to Israel. From the beginning, it was not a type; but when God gave the ceremonial law, it was made a type. So the rainbow, which proceeds from natural causes, was, doubtless, set in the heavens before Noah's time; yet it was not ordained to be a sign of the covenant between God and him, till God ordered it to be so in his time. Thus God ordained the sabbath to be a type or sign to Israel, when he gave them the ceremonial law, though it was not so before. And at Christ's resurrection it ceased to be an ordinance for their faith in the gospel-rest, or to be observed; when another day was substituted in the room of it, namely, the first day of the week.

It is farther objected that, when the observance of the sabbath was enjoined, God bade the Israelites 'remember that they were servants in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord their God brought them out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm;' and 'therefore commanded them to keep the sabbath day.'^q But God's bringing his people out of Egypt, is no argument that this commandment is a part of the ceremonial law, which was given soon after that time. For, in the preface to the ten commandments, his bringing his people out of the land of Egypt is assigned as a reason why they should observe all the commandments. Hence, it might as well be inferred that they are all a part of the ceremonial law, as that the fourth commandment is so; since they are all enforced by the same motive. Again, though this particular reason is given to induce the Israelites to observe this commandment, and it is in a more especial manner applied to that dispensation of providence which they were lately under; yet it could not be said to apply to the first institution of the sabbath, if we suppose, as we shall endeavour to prove under a following Head, that it was instituted before Moses' time. Further, the particular reason taken from their having been 'servants in Egypt,' is added to enforce the obligation laid on masters, to let their servants rest on the sabbath day, namely, because they themselves were once servants in Egypt; without any reference being made to the matter of the commandment, or any intimation that it is a branch of the ceremonial law.

The Date of the Sabbatic Institution.

We shall now consider when this law, relating to the observation of the sabbath,

was first given. There are various opinions about this matter. Some think that the sabbath was first instituted when God spake to Israel from mount Sinai; inasmuch as it is one of the ten commandments which God gave them from that place. But we may remark that the sabbath was observed some days before Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai, namely, when they were in the wilderness of Sin. Thus Moses, when speaking concerning their gathering twice as much manna as was usual, the day before the sabbath, assigns as a reason for it, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.'^r And that this was before they encamped at mount Sinai, appears from its being said that 'they came into the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month,'^s whereas they did not come into the wilderness of Sinai, till the third month.^t Others, therefore, fix the epoch of the giving this law, from their coming into the wilderness of Sin; this being the first time in which the sabbath is expressly said in scripture to have been observed. Nothing, however, can be justly inferred to this effect from the mode of expression used by Moses in this scripture; for it argues, not the giving of a new law, which had not been before observed, but only the putting them in mind of the observance of that day which had, for some time, been disregarded. Accordingly, the approach of the sabbath is assigned as a reason of their gathering twice the quantity of manna on the sixth day; which supposes that they knew beforehand, that they were to rest on the seventh. It is highly probable, indeed, that the observance of this commandment had been neglected, for some years before, while they were in Egypt; and it may be, they were not suffered by those who held them there in bondage to observe it, and many other of the divine laws. Yet the memory of the sabbath was not wholly lost among them; and Moses now puts them in mind of it.

The most probable opinion therefore relating to the institution of the sabbath, is, that it was given to man from the beginning. This may be argued from the reason annexed to the commandment, namely, God's resting from his work of creation; and it immediately follows, that when he rested from his work, he blessed and sanctified the seventh day; that so man might celebrate and commemorate his power and glory which had been displayed.^u It is objected, however, that God's blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, may be understood *proleptically*, as denoting that at first he sanctified or ordained that it should be a sabbath to his people in following ages; and that it did not become so till Moses' time. Accordingly, the objectors suppose that Moses, having been speaking of the creation of the world, and God's resting from his work, gives them to understand that this was the reason of the law which was now given them, concerning the observance of the sabbath, which they never heard of before. But this sense of the text will appear very absurd to any unprejudiced person. For if God's resting from his work, which is mentioned immediately before, as the reason of his sanctifying the seventh day, is to be taken literally, why must his sanctifying the sabbath be taken figuratively? If the one be an account of what was just done, why should the other be an account of what was not to take place till two thousand and five hundred years after?

Again, if God had a church in the world, and public worship was performed by them from Adam to Moses' time, then there were set times in which they were to meet together for that end, and consequently a sabbath. This stated season of sacred rest was equally necessary for the good of the church in foregoing as in following ages; and therefore we cannot suppose that it should have been denied that privilege then which has been granted it ever since, or that from Moses' time the church should be obliged to celebrate the glory of God, as their Creator, sovereign Ruler, and bountiful Benefactor, and by his express command, devote a seventh part of time to this service, and yet that he should lose the glory, and his people the advantage arising from it, before that time.—We are told, however, that the scripture is wholly silent as to this matter; so that nothing can be concluded in favour of the argument we are maintaining. But some think that the scripture is not wholly silent as to this matter; but that it may be inferred from what we read in Gen. iv. 3, 4, where it is said that 'in process of time it came to pass, that Cain

^r Exod. xvi. 23.^s Ver. 1.^t Chap. xix. 1.^u Gen. ii. 1, 2, 3.

brought an offering unto the Lord,' which was, doubtless, an instance of public worship. We render the words 'in process of time;' but they may, with equal justice, be rendered, as is observed in the margin, 'at the end of days;' that is, at the end of that cycle of days which we generally call a week, or on the seventh day. Then the offering was brought, and the solemn worship performed; and hereby the sabbath was sanctified according to God's institution. But if this argument be not allowed, it does not follow that the scripture's not mentioning their observing a sabbath, gives us just ground to suppose that they did not observe any. It might as well be argued that, because the scripture speaks very little of any public worship performed before the flood, there was then none in the world; or that as we do not read of the church's observing a sabbath, and many other parts of instituted worship all the time of the Judges, which is said to have been 'about the space of four hundred and fifty years,'^x it follows that a sabbath was not observed during the whole of that interval, and all instituted worship was wholly neglected.

The next thing to be inquired into is, whether the sabbath was instituted before or after the fall of our first parents. Now it appears to have been instituted before the fall; because the reason of its institution was God's resting from his work of creation, of which we read before the account of their fall. It is objected, however, that Adam, in innocency, had no man-servants, nor maid-servants, nor stranger within his gate; and therefore was not in a capacity to observe this commandment. But before the world was increased, our first parents might observe the principal thing contained in the commandment, by setting apart a day for religious worship; and, when the world was increased, the other part of the commandment, which is only circumstantial, might also be observed. Indeed, this objection might be as much alleged against Adam's being obliged to yield obedience to the fifth, seventh, and eighth commandments, as against his obeying the fourth.

The Change of the Sabbath.

It is farther observed, in this Answer, that the day which we call a seventh part of time, was the seventh day of the week, from the beginning of the world till the resurrection of Christ; and that it has been the first day of the week ever since, and will continue to be so till the end of the world. The latter is the Christian sabbath, or the Lord's day. That the seventh day of the week was observed as a sabbath at first, is taken for granted. Nor do we find that it was abolished by a positive law, so that there should be no sabbath; but the day was changed, by substituting another in its room. If, according to the fourth commandment, there is to be but one sabbath in the week, and the other six days are allowed for our own lawful employments, and if we can prove, as we shall attempt to do, that the first day of the week is the Christian sabbath, then it follows that the seventh day ceases to be a sabbath. It may be observed, indeed, from several ecclesiastical writers, that some, in the three first centuries, observed both the seventh and the first day of the week. As for the apostles, they often assembled with the Jews, in their synagogues, on the seventh day;^y but they did so with a design to propagate the Christian religion among them, which could not, with equal conveniency, be done on other days. The church afterwards met together on that day, as well as the Lord's day, apprehending that, though it was not now to be reckoned God's holy day, or the Christian sabbath, yet the observance of it was expedient in order that they might keep up the memory of his having, on that day, finished the work of creation. Others kept it as a day of fasting, accompanied with other religious exercises, in memory of Christ's lying that day in the grave. But this practice can hardly be justified. It is evident, however, that they did not pay the same regard to it as to the Lord's day, nor style it God's holy day, or the Christian sabbath, by way of eminence. Some expressly intimated that, whatever regard they paid to the seventh day, or what assemblies soever they held on it for worship, they did not observe it in the same way the Jews did.^z Nor were they obliged to hold meetings on that day, as they were on the Lord's day, the matter being, in part, left to their discre-

^x Acts xiii. 20.

^y Acts xiii. 14. and xvii. 2.

^z Vid. Athanas. Hom. de Semente.

tion. It was supposed that they had sufficient leisure from their secular callings, and therefore might attend to the worship of God on that day, as an opportunity offered itself; though they did not count it equally holy with the Lord's day, nor were obliged, when the worship was over, to abstain from their secular employments.^a I mention these facts only occasionally, in order to obviate an objection taken from the practice of some of the ancient church, in observing the seventh day of the week; an argument which does not much affect the cause we are maintaining, our design being to prove that the first day of the week is ordained to be the Christian sabbath. But before we enter on that subject, it may be necessary to premise some considerations.

It does not in the least derogate from the honour and glory of God, to change the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. It would, indeed, derogate from the glory of God if he should take away one sabbath and not institute another in its room; for then he would lose the honour of that public worship which he has appointed to be performed to him on that day. Moreover, if there be a greater work than that of creation to be remembered and celebrated, it tends much more to the advancing of the glory of God, to appoint a day for the solemn remembrance of that work than if no such appointment should be made. We may add, that if all men must honour the Son even as they honour the Father, it is expedient that a day should be set apart for his honour, namely, the day on which he rested from the work of redemption, or, as the apostle says, 'ceased from it, as God did from his.'^b On the following grounds, then, it was expedient that God should alter the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.—Hereby Christ took occasion to give a display of his glory, and in particular of his sovereign authority, to enjoin what time he would have us set apart for his worship under the gospel-dispensation, as well as what worship he will have performed in it, and to discover himself to be, as he styles himself, 'the Lord of the sabbath day.'^c—Again, we, in the observance of the Christian sabbath, signify our faith, in a public manner, that Christ is come in the flesh, that the work of our redemption is brought to perfection, and consequently that there is a way prepared for our justification and access to God, as our God, in hope of finding acceptance in his sight.—Further, all the ordinances of gospel-worship have a peculiar relation to Christ; and it is accordingly expedient that the time in which they are to be performed under the gospel-dispensation, should likewise have relation to him. Hence, that day in which he finished his work of redemption must be set apart in commemoration of it; and that was the first day of the week.

We are now led to consider what ground we have to conclude that the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, after the resurrection of Christ.

1. This change of the sabbath appears from the example of Christ and his apostles, who celebrated the first day of the week as a sabbath, after his resurrection. Thus we read that 'the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.'^d And 'after eight days,' or the eighth day after inclusive, 'again his disciples were within; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.'^e Here we may observe, that the meeting spoken of was not merely an occasional meeting, but a fixed one, which returned weekly. Hence, they met eight days after, or the following first day of the week; which was the second Christian sabbath. Again, on both these days of their meeting together for public worship, Christ appeared in the midst of them, and spake peace to them. He thus owned the day, and confirmed their faith in the observance of it as a sabbath, for the future.

It is objected that the reason of the apostles meeting together on the first day of the week, was for fear of the Jews; and not because that day was substituted in

^a Vid. Ignat. Epist. ad Magn. And much more to the same purpose may be seen in a learned book, entitled, *Dies Dominica*. in cap. iii. et alibi passim.

^b Heb. iv. 10.

^c Matt. xii. 8.

^d John xx. 19.

^e Verse 26.

the room of the seventh day, as a sabbath perpetually to be observed. But it is not said that they met together for fear of the Jews ; but that when they were assembled, the doors were shut for fear of them. Besides, the fear of persecution would have been no warrant for them, not to keep the seventh-day sabbath, or to substitute another day in the room of it. We may add, too, that they might have more securely met together on the seventh day of the week, than on any other day, if they had been afraid of disturbance from the Jews ; for then the Jews were engaged in worship themselves, and it is probable, would be inclined to let them alone, for want of leisure to give them disturbance in their worship.

2. That the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, farther appears from the fact that this was a day in which the church met, together with the apostles, for solemn public worship. Thus we read that ‘upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.’^f Now this was not a private, but a public meeting of the church ; for it is said, that the disciples, that is, the church, met together. Nor was the day occasionally appointed by the apostle ; but it was the stated usual time of their meeting. For it is said, not that Paul designed to preach to them on that day, and therefore they met together ; but that when they came together, ‘on the first day of the week,’ that is, on the day of their usual meeting, ‘Paul preached unto them.’ Again, the apostle had been with them some days before ; for it is said in the foregoing verse, that ‘he abode there seven days.’ Now, why did they not meet together, and he preach to them the day before, namely, the seventh day of the week, on which day he was with them ; but because that was no longer a sabbath, but changed to the first day ? Further, the object of their meeting was to break bread. Now, though the word is to be preached in season and out of season ; yet no day is so proper to break bread on, or celebrate the Lord’s supper, as that on which he rose from the dead. Besides, when a day is particularly described as that which is set apart for solemn worship, such as preaching and breaking of bread is supposed to be, that day must be understood to be the sabbath. Moreover, the disciples could not be said now to meet together for fear of the Jews, as was before objected to their observing the first sabbath ; for the meeting in this case was at Troas, where the Jews had no influence, and could not persecute them, the church consisting of converted Gentiles.

It is objected that the word which we render ‘the first day of the week,’^g might be rendered ‘one day of the week,’ or a certain day. But our translation of the Greek word is by far the most proper, as all know who understand that language. Besides, the same words are used in John xx. 1, and Luke xxiv. 1, in both of which scriptures Christ’s resurrection is said to have occurred ‘on the first day of the week.’ How preposterous would it be, to render the words there, ‘on a certain day of the week ?’ And if they are, in these scriptures, and in others which might be referred to, to be rendered ‘the first day of the week,’ as all allow they must, why should they be rendered otherwise in the text under present consideration ?—It is farther objected, that their meeting together on the first day of the week to break bread, does not argue the day to have been a sabbath ; because in the early ages the Lord’s supper used to be administered whenever the word was preached, and that was on other days, besides the first day of the week ; yea, we read, that in some ages of the church the word was preached, and the Lord’s supper administered, every day. But though the Lord’s supper may be administered on another day, yet, as has been already observed, the occasion mentioned in the passage in question is said to have been the day more especially appointed for the observance of this solemn ordinance, or for public worship. Besides, though the Lord’s supper was administered on other days after this ; it will be hard to prove that it was administered on any other day than the Lord’s day in the apostles’ time.

3. The change of the sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week, may be farther argued from 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, in which the apostle says, ‘As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the

^f Acts xx. 7.

^g Εν τη μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων.

week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him; that there be no gatherings when I come.' Here we may observe that there is a work of charity recommended,—a duty most proper for the sabbath, as a testimony of our thankfulness to God for spiritual blessings held forth to or received by us on that day; and it is a day in which our hearts are most likely to be enlarged to others, when most affected with the love of God to us. Those duties which the prophet recommends as suitable to a fast which God had chosen, are very suitable to all public ordinances, and in particular to sabbaths, namely, 'to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to deal forth bread to the hungry.'^h If the poor of the church were to be provided for, this was to be done not by a private but by a public collection, whereby more might be raised, and no burden laid on particular persons. It is said, moreover, that they were to 'lay by as God had prospered them;' that is, not only in proportion to the increase of their worldly substance, or the success which attended their secular employments on other days, but in proportion to the spiritual advantage they received from Christ under his ordinances. Again, this work of charity was to be done, not on one first day of the week, but on the return of every first day; as all who read this scripture impartially must understand it.ⁱ Hence, the first day of the week was a day in which the church met together for solemn, public, and stated worship. Further, the work was not only commanded to the church at Corinth, but was agreeable to what had been commanded to 'all the churches of Galatia.' It follows that the churches of Galatia were obliged to observe the first day of the week, as well as that at Corinth. And inasmuch as this epistle is directed to 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ,'^k it may, by a parity of reason, be applied to them. Accordingly, it may be argued that it was a universal practice of the church at that time, to meet together for religious worship on the first day of the week. This argument cannot but have some weight to prove the doctrine which we are maintaining, as to the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

4. The change of the sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week, farther appears from the fact that there is a day, mentioned in the New Testament, which is styled 'the Lord's day.' Thus it is said, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'^l Here it may be observed, that there is a peculiar claim which Christ lays to this day as his own, distinct from all other days. As the seventh day of the week was formerly called, as in this commandment, 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God,' and elsewhere, 'his holy day';^m so there is a peculiar day which our Saviour, who is the Lord here spoken of, claims as his holy day. And what can this be, but that day which he instituted in commemoration of his having finished the work of our redemption? It may be farther observed that, when God is said to lay claim to things in scripture, the meaning is that they are of his appointment, and for his glory. Thus the bread and the wine in that ordinance which Christ has appointed in remembrance of his death, is called 'the Lord's supper,' or 'the Lord's table,' denoting that it is an ordinance of his own appointment. In like manner, 'the Lord's day' may be fitly so called for the reason that it is instituted by him.

The arguments which have hitherto been brought to prove that the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, are principally such as are founded on a scripture consequence. We shall now proceed to prove that this consequence is just, namely, that because the first day of the week was observed by our Saviour, his apostles, and the church in general, as the Lord's day, that is, a day instituted by him in commemoration of his having finished the work of our redemption, therefore we ought to observe it for that end. It is not to be supposed that this day was universally observed by the church at random, or by accident, without some direction given them. For as the apostles were appointed to erect the gospel church, and, as God's ministers, to give laws to it, relating to the instituted worship which was to be performed in it, it is reasonable to suppose that they gave direction concerning the time in which public solemn worship should be per-

^h Isa. lviii. 6, 7. ⁱ Κατα μιαν σαββατον. ^k 1 Cor. i. 2. ^l 1 Rev. i. 10. ^m Isa. lviii. 13.

formed. Now, whatever the apostles ordered the church to observe, in matters belonging to religious worship, they did it by divine direction ; otherwise the rules they laid down for instituted worship could not be much depended on, and they would doubtless have been blamed, as not having fulfilled the commission which they received from Christ, to 'teach' the church 'to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.' Nor could the apostle have made this appeal to the church: 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God ;'ⁿ and elsewhere, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ;'^o and, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.'^p Nor would he have acted agreeably to the character he gave of himself and the rest of the apostles, concerning whom he says, 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.'^q And he says concerning himself, 'I have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful ;'^r and elsewhere, 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'^s Hence, whatever directions he gave about the time as well as mode of worship, were stamped with divine authority ; so that an apostolic intimation relating to this matter contained a divine command.

Those things which were delivered to the church by persons under divine inspiration, are not to be reckoned among the traditions which the Papists plead for, which took their rise in those ages when inspiration had ceased. The apostle uses the word 'tradition' in the same sense in which we are to understand a divine oracle, or a command given by those who were divinely inspired. Accordingly, he says 'I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances,' or, as it is in the margin, 'traditions, as I delivered them to you.'^t And elsewhere he exhorts them to 'hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or his epistle ;'^u that is, all those things which had been communicated to them by divine inspiration, in whatever form they were transmitted to them, whether by word or writing ; which different circumstances of imparting them, do not in the least detract from their divine authority. The laws which God gave to his church, were either immediately from himself, as the ten commandments, or were given by those who were inspired for that purpose. Indeed, the greater part of what related to gospel worship was in the latter way. This was either verbal or real ; the former containing an intimation of what the apostles had received of the Lord, and the latter being enforced by their example and practice. Now, their example and practice, supposing them under divine inspiration, was a sufficient warrant for the faith and practice of the church, whether relating to the mode or to the time of worship ; and consequently, the practice and example of the apostles and church, in their day, in observing the first day of the week, is a sufficient argument to convince us concerning the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the Lord's day, which was to be observed by the church in all succeeding ages.

A question is proposed by some, When was it that Christ gave instructions to the apostles concerning the change of the sabbath ? But this is an over-curious inquiry. It is enough for us to conclude that this, together with other laws given by them relating to the gospel-dispensation, were given by him during that interval of time in which 'he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ;'^x of which, we may reasonably suppose this to have been one. But if this consideration be not reckoned sufficient for confirming our faith, we have the highest reason to conclude that it was given by the inspiration of the Spirit, concerning whom Christ promised to the apostles that he would guide 'them into all truth,' and that he should 'show them things to them.'^y By this we are to understand that he was to lead them, not only into those truths which were necessary for them to know as Christians, but into those things which it was necessary for them as ministers to impart to the churches as a rule of faith and practice. This, I think, may give us sufficient satisfaction, as to the divine origin of the

n Acts xx. 27.

s 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

o 1 Cor. xi. 23.

t Chap. xi. 2.

p Chap. xv. 3.

u 2 Thess. ii. 15.

q Chap. iv. 1.

x Acts i. 3.

r Chap. vii. 25.

y John xvi. 13.

Lord's day ; without our being obliged to have recourse to an ecclesiastical establishment, without a divine institution, a device which would very much detract from the dignity and glory of the Christian sabbath, and from the regard which we ought to pay to it, as the Lord's holy day. We have considered that it was instituted by the apostles ; that they had instructions in all things relating to the edification of the church ; and that they were so faithful, in what they imparted, that they cannot be, in the least, suspected of intruding any invention of their own into the worship of God, in this any more than any other branch of that worship, —to suppose which, would leave us in the greatest uncertainty as to matters of the highest importance. Thus, concerning the observance of the Lord's day, as founded on a divine warrant given to the church by the ministry of the apostles, who were appointed by God to make known those laws to them which respect the manner and time in which he will be worshipped, under the gospel-dispensation.

The next thing to be considered, is that the church, in and after the apostles' time, universally attended to the religious observance of the Lord's day ; which was celebrated as a sabbath in all succeeding ages. This is so evident from history that it needs no proof. That the apostles and the church in their day observed it, has been already considered ; and that the observance of it was continued in the church after their death, appears from the writings of most of the Fathers, who speak of it as a day in which the church met together for public worship, and to which they paid a much greater deference than to any of the other days of the week in which they occasionally attended on the exercise of religious duties. Thus Ignatius, who lived in the beginning of the second century, advises every one who loved Christ to celebrate the Lord's day, which was consecrated to his resurrection ; and he calls it ' the queen, and chief of all days.'^z Justin Martyr, also, who lived about the middle of the same century, in one of his apologies for the Christians, says, " On that day, which they," namely, the heathen, " call Sunday, all who live in cities or villages, meet together in the same place, where the writings of the apostles and prophets are read, and we all assemble ; it being the day in which God finished the creation, and Jesus Christ, our Saviour, rose from the dead. For the day before Saturday he was crucified ; and the day after it, that is, Sunday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and instructed them in those things which we propose to your consideration."^a In the third century, when persecution so much raged against the church, it is well-known that Christians distinguish themselves, by the character of observers of the Lord's day, which they reckon a badge of Christianity.^b I need not descend any lower, to prove that the Lord's day was universally observed by the church, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, in all succeeding ages ; for that is generally allowed. I shall therefore add only a simple thought or two to illustrate this argument, taken from the practice of the Christian church, from our Saviour's resurrection to this day. It cannot reasonably be supposed that God would suffer his church universally to run into so great a mistake, as to keep a wrong day as a weekly sabbath ; and that not only in one

^z Vid. Ignat. Epist. ad Magnes.

^a Vid. Just. Mart. edit. a Grab. Apol. i. § 87, and 89. It may be observed, that that Father is not alone in his calling it Sunday. Tertullian [Adv. Gent. cap. xvi.] calls it so ; and Jerome says it may be so called, because the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings. But it is generally called ' the Lord's day ;' not only by others, but by the same Fathers, except when, in their apologies for the Christian religion against the heathen, they used the word in compliance with their mode of speaking. But that which is more strange, and savours a little of affectation, is that Justin, and some others of the Fathers, should choose to use a circumlocution, and instead of Friday, say ' the day before Saturday.' Ignatius, in Epist. ad Trall. calls it *parasceva*, or, the preparation for the sabbath, as the Jews did ; and Irenæus calls it the day before the sabbath, in lib. v. adv. Her. cap. xxiii. The learned Grabe supposes the reason of this to have been that they might show how much they detested the name of Venus, to whom Friday was dedicated by the heathen. But they ought to have been as cautious of using the word Sunday ; for not only was that day dedicated to the Sun, but some took occasion from the name given to it, to asperse the Christians as if they worshipped the Sun, a charge from which Tertullian, in Apol. adv. Gent. cap. xvi. is obliged to exculpate them.

^b *Dominicum agere*, or *celebrare*, was a phrase well known in that age, in which many Christians were put to death, upon their being examined, and boldly professing that they observed the Lord's day. The assemblies in which all the parts of public worship were performed on that day, were generally called *Synaxes*.

or two, but in all ages, since our Saviour's time. Whatever error particular churches have been suffered to imbibe, God has not left them all, before the corruption and apostasy of the church of Rome, as well as since the Reformation, to be deceived; yet they must have been so left, had they esteemed that to be God's holy day which he has neither instituted nor owned as such. Again, God has not only suffered all his churches to go on in this error, if it be an error, and not undeceived them; but he has, at the same time, granted them many signal marks of his favour, and has, to this day, in many instances, owned the strict and religious observance of the Christian sabbath. Now, we can hardly suppose him to have done this, or to have given a sanction to it, by being present with his people when attending on him in it, in the ordinances of his appointment, if the day had not been of his own institution.

The Relative Time of the Sabbath.

We now come to observe the proportion of time which is to be observed as a weekly sabbath. It is said in this Answer, we are to keep holy to God, one whole day in seven. A day is either artificial or natural. The former is the space of time from the sun's rising to its setting; the latter includes the space of twenty-four hours. Now, the Lord's day must be supposed to continue longer than the measure of an artificial day; otherwise it would fall short of a seventh part of time. But this point has not so many difficulties attending it, as that has which relates to the time of the day when the sabbath begins. Yet we have some direction as to this matter, from the intimation given us that Christ rose from the dead 'on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark.'^c Hence, the Lord's day begins in the morning, before sun-rising; or, according to our usual way of reckoning, we may conclude, that it begins immediately after midnight, and continues till midnight following. This is our common method of computing time, beginning the day with the morning, and ending it with the evening; and it is agreeable to the psalmist's observation, 'Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour' in the morning, 'until the evening.'^d Rest, in the order of nature, follows labour; and the night follows the day. Hence, the Lord's day evening follows the day; and on this account, the day must be supposed to begin in the morning. Again, if the sabbath begins in the evening, religious worship ought to be performed some time in the evening; and then, soon after it is begun, it will be interrupted by the succeeding night, and it must be revived the following day. Besides, as to the design of the sabbath, it seems not agreeable to it that, when we have been engaged in the worship of God in the day, we should spend the evening in secular employments; yet our doing so cannot be judged unlawful, if the sabbath be then at an end. It is much more expedient that the whole work of the day should be continued as long as our worldly employments are on other days; and that our beginning and ending the performance of religious duties, should, in some measure, correspond with the nature of them. Again, that the sabbath begins in the morning may be proved from what is said in Exod. xvi. 23, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord;' whereas, if the sabbath had begun in the evening, it would rather have been said, 'This evening begins the rest of the holy sabbath.' Another scripture generally brought to prove this argument, is John xx. 19, 'The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.' Here the evening of the first day of the week is called 'the evening of the same day;' so that the worship which was performed that day was continued in the evening. It is not called the evening of the next day, but of the same day in which Christ rose from the dead; which was the first Christian sabbath.

It is objected that the ceremonial sabbaths under the law, began at evening. Thus it is said, 'In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, is the Lord's passover;'^e and, speaking concerning the feast of expiation, which was on the

^c John xx. 1; Luke xxiv. 1.

^d Psal. civ. 23.

^e Lev. xxiii. 5.

tenth day of the seventh month, it is said, 'It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest; and ye shall afflict your souls in the ninth day of the month, at even. From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.'^f We reply, that the beginning of sacred days is to be at the same time with that of civil; and the date of the former was governed by the custom of nations. The Jews' civil day began at evening, and therefore it was ordained that from evening to evening should be the measure of their sacred days. Our days have another beginning and ending. This difference, however, is only circumstantial. The principal thing enjoined, is that one whole day in seven be observed as a sabbath to the Lord.

THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXVII. *How is the sabbath, or Lord's day, to be sanctified?*

ANSWER. The sabbath, or Lord's day, is to be sanctified, by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are, at all times, sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful, and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship; and to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation to dispose, and seasonably to despatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

QUESTION CXVIII. *Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?*

ANSWER. The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.

Preparatory Duties to Sabbath-Sanctification.

THE former of these Answers more especially respects the manner in which the sabbath is to be sanctified. The first thing in reference to it which requires our attention, is that we are to prepare our hearts, and, with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose of and seasonably to despatch our worldly business, that we may be more free and fit for the business of that day. We do not read, indeed, that there is any time sanctified, or set apart by God, in order to our preparing for the sabbath; but this matter is left to our Christian prudence. Yet we read in the New Testament of the day of preparation for the sabbath; that is, the day before the Jewish sabbath. Persons who had any sense of the importance of the work to be performed on the following day, thought it their duty to prepare for it beforehand, at least by giving despatch to their worldly business, that their thoughts might be fixed on the duties in which they were to engage. Thus we read that 'that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.' And they returned and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the sabbath day, according to the commandment.'^g The mixing of ointments and spices, which were compounded, according to the custom of those times, for the embalming of the dead, was a work of labour, and not fit to be done on the sabbath. They therefore did this work the day before, that they might not be brought under any necessity of performing that on the sabbath which might be done on another day. This practice of despatching worldly business, in order to their being prepared for the sacred employment of the sabbath, seems to have been inculcated when the observance of that day was revived by Moses in the wilderness of Sin. On that occasion he says, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.'^h The meaning of this is, that they were to gather the manna,—work which would take up a considerable time,—and to grind or prepare it for baking or seething. This was a servile or laborious work, and

^f Lev. xxiii. 32.

^g Luke xxiii. 54, 56.

^h Exod. xvi. 23.

might as well be done the day before. Accordingly, they were commanded then to despatch or finish it, that they might rest in and sanctify the sabbath immediately following. As to the time which the more religious Jews took, in preparing for the sabbath before it came, something may be learned from the practice of holy Nehemiah; whereby it appears that, in order to their preparing for the sabbath the day before, they laid aside their worldly business at sunset, or when it began to be dark. Thus it is said, 'When the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, he commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath.'ⁱ This matter, however, was discretionary; and some Jewish writers observe that many of them began to prepare for the sabbath the evening before, at six o'clock, and some at three; and that others spent the whole day before in the despatch of their secular business, that they might be better prepared for the sabbath. Now, this practice as to what is equitable or moral in it, is, doubtless, an example to us; so that we may say as Hezekiah did in his prayer, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.'^k

This leads us to consider the duties to be performed preparatory to the right observing of the Lord's day. Now, we ought, the evening before, to lay aside our care and worldly business, that our thoughts may not be encumbered, diverted, or taken up with unseasonable or unlawful concerns about it. This is a duty very much neglected; and the omission of it is one reason of our unprofitable attendance on the ordinances of God on the Lord's day. Thus, many keep their shops open till midnight; and by this means make encroachments on part of the morning of the Lord's day, by indulging in too much sleep,—a practice which occasions drowsiness under the ordinances, as well as their thoughts being filled with worldly concerns and business while attending on them. We may add, that all envyings, contentions, evil surmising against our neighbour, are to be laid aside; since these will tend to defile our souls and deprave our minds, when we ought to be wholly taken up about divine things. Thus the apostle advises those to whom he writes, to 'lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, and as newborn babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby.'^l Moreover, we are, the evening before, to endeavour to bring our souls into a prepared frame for the duties of the Lord's day, by having our thoughts engaged in those meditations which are suitable to these duties. In particular, we are to consider the many lost sabbaths we have to account for or repent of, as also the wonderful patience of God, who has, notwithstanding, spared us to the approach of another sabbath; and what precautions are necessary to be used, that we may not profane or trifle it away. It would also be expedient for us to meditate on the vanity of worldly things, which we have laid aside all care about, and think how contemptible the gain of them is, if compared with communion with God, which is our great concern. Hence, we are to consider ourselves as having a greater work to transact with God on his own day, and desire to have then no disturbance from the world. To these meditations we ought to join our fervent prayers to God, that the sins committed by us in former sabbaths may be forgiven, that he may not be provoked to withdraw the influences of his Spirit on the approaching day, and that the world, with its cares, may not then be a snare to us, through the temptations of Satan, together with the corruption of our own hearts, whereby our converse with God would be interrupted. We ought to pray also that he would assist his ministers in preparing a seasonable word, which may be blessed to ourselves and others. Thus the apostle exhorts the church, to 'pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints; and for him, that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.'^m We ought to be very importunate with God, that he would sanctify and fill our thoughts, from the beginning to the end of the Lord's day, which he has consecrated for his immediate service and glory.

ⁱ Neh. xiii. 19.^k 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19.^l 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.^m Eph. vi. 18, 19.

The Sabbath Rest.

We are now to consider what we are to rest and abstain from on the Lord's day. This is included in two general Heads, namely, not only from things sinful, but from what is in itself lawful on other days.

As to those things which are sinful on other days, they are much more so on the sabbath; for when we do them then we contract double guilt, not only in committing the sin, but in breaking the sabbath. Such sins are, for the most part, presumptuously committed, and greatly tend to harden the heart; and they not only hinder the efficacy of the ordinances, but, if allowed, and persisted in, are a sad step to apostasy.

We break the sabbath also by engaging in things which would be lawful on other days, whether these be worldly employments or recreations. We are wholly to lay aside or abstain from worldly employments, particularly buying and selling or encouraging those who do so. We have a noble instance of zeal in Nehemiah, relating to this matter. He says, 'In those days saw I in Judah, some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. And I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?'ⁿ The prophet Jeremiah also speaks to the same purpose, when he prohibits 'carrying burdens on the sabbath day, or doing any work' therein, and exhorts the people to 'hallow the sabbath day as God commanded their fathers.'^o These texts may tend to reprove those tradesmen who, on the sabbath, post their books, state their accounts, or prepare their goods, which are to be exposed to sale on the following day. And if we do not run these lengths in profaning the sabbath, yet we are highly guilty when our thoughts and discourse run after our covetousness, which is, in effect, a saying as they did who complained, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat?'^p This conduct the prophet reproveth when he says, 'They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. For with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.'^q

Again, the sabbath is violated by recreations. We are therefore to abstain from these; otherwise we spurn at the sabbath. Accordingly, the prophet Isaiah speaks of those who sanctify the sabbath, as 'turning away their foot from doing their pleasure on God's holy day, and calling the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, honouring him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words.'^r The recreations we are to abstain from, on the Lord's day, are unnecessary visits; by which the worship of God in families is interrupted, the minds of men perverted and filled with vanity, the motions of the Spirit quenched, and the advantage of public worship greatly hindered, if not wholly lost. We are to abstain also from walking in the fields; whereby, instead of meditating on the word, the mind is diverted from it. We may add, that we are to abstain from taking unnecessary journeys. These will appear to be no other than finding our own pleasure and doing our own works on God's holy day. We read, indeed, of 'a sabbath day's journey';^s a phrase which seems to argue that it was not unlawful to travel on the Lord's day. But, that we may not mistake this matter, let it be considered that 'a sabbath day's journey,' according to Jewish writers, contained the length of two thousand cubits, or about a mile; which was, ordinarily speaking, the length of their cities, together with their respective suburbs. Now, as this is the measure of a sabbath day's journey, the phrase implies that they were not to go out of their cities to divert themselves, or to under-

ⁿ Neh. xiii. 15, 16, 17.

^q Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

^o Jer. xvii. 21, 22.

^r Isa. lviii. 13.

^p Amos viii. 5.

^s Acts i. 12.

take journeys under a pretence of business. Accordingly, they were commanded to 'abide every man in his place on the seventh day ;'^t that is, not to wander out of their tents to take the air, though they were obliged to go out of their tents to the tabernacle, the place of public worship, which was pitched in the midst of them for the conveniency of their coming to it. Hither, indeed, they went, from their respective tents ; and their going to it was the only journey they took, unless in case of necessity, on the sabbath day. We may add, that it is not lawful, on the sabbath day, for persons to divert themselves by talking of news or common affairs. Such unseasonable discourse often gives a check to those lively frames of spirit we have had under the word preached ; and by indulging it, we not only break the sabbath ourselves, but, by our example, induce others to do the same. I do not deny that it may be seasonable to meditate on the providence of God towards the church and the world, on the Lord's day, as well as at other times ; but then we must take heed that his glory, and not merely our own diversion, is the great inducement to such meditation.

Works of Necessity and Mercy.

When it is said, in this fourth commandment, 'Thou shalt do no manner of work on the sabbath day,' there is an exception made, or an intimation that works of necessity and mercy, though they include something servile or laborious, may, notwithstanding, be done on the Lord's day. Some things are necessary, as they tend to the support of nature, such as eating and drinking. Hence, the providing of food for that end, is doubtless, lawful ; especially if too much time be not spent in it, too many servants or others detained by it from the worship of God, or entertainments and splendid feasts made, in which variety of things are prepared to please the appetite, and all this attended with vain and trifling conversation, unbecoming the holiness of the day. There are also other works of necessity which may be done on the sabbath day, namely, such as are subservient to the worship of God ; without which it is impossible that the public exercises of that worship should be performed. Under the ceremonial law, there were many laborious services which attended public worship,—particularly the killing of those beasts which were appointed for sacrifice on the sabbath day ; though we are exempted from such services under the gospel-dispensation. To these, it is probable, our Saviour refers when he says, 'Have ye not read in the law, how that the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless ?'^u that is, perform those servile works, subservient to public worship, which, according to your method of reasoning, would be a profaning of the sabbath.

Here it is inquired by some, whether it be lawful to kindle a fire on the sabbath day, since this seems to have been forbidden to the Israelites ; to whom Moses says, 'Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.'^x Some are of opinion, that if this be lawful at present, agreeably to what we generally practise, its being so is a peculiar privilege attending the gospel-dispensation. We may hence take occasion to explain what is meant by this prohibition. Now, it could not have been hereby forbidden to kindle a fire for refreshment in cold weather ; for that was as necessary as any of the other conveniences of life, such as eating, drinking, sitting down when we are weary, &c. It was done, too, with very little pains or difficulty ; so that it would not much hinder the religious exercises of the sabbath. On the other hand, the not making a fire, provided the season of the year was extremely cold, would indispose men for the worship of God : It is most probable, therefore, that the meaning of the text in question is this, that as at the time when this law was given, many of the Israelites were employed in the work of building and adorning the tabernacle, a work which, as all artificers know, required the kindling of fires for the melting of metals, heating of iron tools, &c., and, as the people might be apt to think that, because the building of the tabernacle required expedition, they might kindle fires and therewith employ themselves in the work of it, on the sabbath day ; Moses tells them, that it was not a

^t Exod. xvi. 29.

^u Matt. xii. 5.

^x Exod. xxxv. 3.

work so absolutely necessary that it required that they should attend to it on that day. This seems to be the reason of the law which prohibited the kindling of a fire on the sabbath day. But there was an application of that law to the dressing of food, which seems to be prohibited in the passage, 'Bake that ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay it up to be kept for you until the morning.'^y Now, the meaning of this seems to be, 'Bake or seethe that which is necessary for your food, the day before the sabbath, and lay up the rest, to be baked or seethed on the sabbath.' The command more especially prohibits the gathering of manna on the sabbath, and preparing it for baking or seething; which would have taken up too great a part of the day, and have been a diversion from religious worship. But the baking or seething which would have afforded but a small interruption to the work of the sabbath, does not seem to have been forbidden.

We are now led to inquire what judgment we may pass on the 'stoning of the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day.'^z The gathering of sticks for the making of a fire on the sabbath day, seems to be a work of necessity. Hence, some may be ready to conclude that the punishment inflicted on him was too severe. But, instead of excepting against the greatness of the punishment inflicted, I would rather infer that the crime was very great. For he might have gathered sticks on other days, and so have provided a sufficient quantity for his necessary use on the sabbath day; or else he should have been content to have been without a fire on that day, rather than give so ill a precedent of the breach of the sabbath. Again, it is probable that he gathered the sticks, not to supply his present necessities, but to increase his store; and, that he did not gather a few sticks, but a large quantity. But his acting thus cannot be pretended to be a work of necessity. Nor is it unlikely, that the man made a practice of it, for several sabbaths together; and so lived in a total contempt and neglect of God's public ordinances. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that he persisted in this practice presumptuously, publicly, and in defiance of the divine command, after having been reprov'd for it; and he might obstinately vindicate it, and resolve, for the future, to persist in it; for to do so is the nature of a presumptuous sin. It is plain, indeed, that he sinned presumptuously. For, in the verses immediately foregoing, God had threatened that 'the soul that doth ought presumptuously,' or, as it is in the margin, 'with an high hand,' who 'reproached the Lord' herein, 'should be cut off;' and then the account of the man's being stoned for gathering sticks on the sabbath day, is brought in as an instance of a just punishment of a presumptuous sinner.

These things being duly considered, we cannot take occasion to conclude, as many do, that there is this difference between the legal and the gospel-dispensation, that the sabbath was formerly to be observed more strictly than now; and that the more strict observance of it was a part of the yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, the relaxation of which is reckoned a branch of that liberty which we have under the gospel. This sounds very ill in the ears of all serious Christians, who think the duties of religion, and the strictness of our obligation in regard to them, a privilege rather than a burden. Thus concerning the lawfulness of our performing works of necessity on the sabbath day.

We proceed farther to consider that works of mercy ought to be done on that day; such as visiting and preparing medicines for the sick, relieving the poor, providing food and water for cattle and other brute creatures. This our Saviour vindicates by his practice, and illustrates by asserting the necessity of 'lifting out a sheep,' that has 'fallen into a pit,' on the sabbath day.^a

When, however, we maintain the lawfulness of performing works of necessity and mercy on the sabbath day, some cautions ought to be attended to. First, let the necessity be real, not pretended; of which, God and our own consciences are the judges.—Again, if we think that we have a necessary call to omit or lay aside our attendance on the ordinances of God on the sabbath day, let us take heed that the necessity be not brought on us by some sin committed, which gives occasion to the judicial hand of God. Let us observe also that providence, which renders it neces-

y Exod. xvi. 23.

z See Numb. xv. 32, &c.

a Matt. xii. 10—13.

sary for us to absent from ordinances, should be rather submitted to, than esteemed a matter of choice or delight.—Further, if necessity obliges us to engage in secular employments on the Lord's day, as in the instances of those whose business is to provide physic for the sick, let us, nevertheless, labour to possess a spiritual frame, becoming the holiness of the day, so far as may consist with what we are immediately called to do.—Again, as we ought to see that the work we are engaged in is necessary ; so we must not spend more time in it than what is needful.—Finally, if we have a necessary call to engage in worldly matters, and so be detained from public ordinances, we must endeavour to satisfy others that the providence of God obliges us to act as we do ; that so we may not give offence to them, or they take occasion, without just reason, to follow their own employments, to do which would be a sin in them.

The Sanctifying of the Sabbath.

We are to sanctify the sabbath, by spending the whole day in the public and private exercises of God's worship, and by maintaining a becoming holy frame of spirit, from the beginning of the day to the end of it.

1. In the beginning of the day, let not sleep make encroachments on more of the morning than what is needful, particularly, more than what we allow ourselves before we begin our employments on other days. Let us begin the day with spiritual meditations, and carefully watch against worldly thoughts, as what will give us great interruption and hinderance in the work of the sabbath. Let us be earnest with God in prayer, that he would prepare our hearts for the solemn duties we are to engage in. Let us consider the sabbath as a very great talent that we are intrusted with ; and that it is of the greatest importance for us to improve it, to the glory of God and our spiritual advantage.

2. While we are engaged in holy duties, especially in the public ordinances of God's worship, let us endeavour to maintain a becoming reverence and filial fear of God, in whose presence we are, and a love to his holy institutions, which are stamped with his authority. Let us, moreover, watch and strive against the first motions and suggestions of Satan, and our corrupt hearts, endeavouring to divert us from or disturb us in holy duties. Let us often lift up our hearts to God, by spiritual, short ejaculatory prayers, for help from him, to enable us to improve the word, and, at the same time, endeavour, to our utmost, to affect our hearts with a sense of the great worth of gospel opportunities. Let us also cherish, improve, and bless God for all the influences of his Holy Spirit, which he is pleased, at any time, to grant to us ; or bewail and lament the want of these, when they are withheld.

3. In the intervals between our attendance on the ordinances of God's public worship, we are to engage in private duties, and worship God in and with our families. In order to this, we are to call to mind what we have heard, impress it on our own souls, recommend it to those whom we converse with and are concerned for, and take heed that we do nothing, between one public ordinance and another, which may unfit us for the remaining duties of the day, but, on the other hand, that we strive against and give a check to the least motions of corruption in our own souls.

4. The sabbath is to be sanctified in the evening, when the public ordinances are over. We are then to call to mind with thankfulness, what we have received from God, and how we have behaved ourselves in all the parts of divine worship, in which we have been engaged. We ought to inquire whether the sabbath was welcome to us, and we rejoiced in it as a blessing, as well as set about the observing of it as a duty ; as the psalmist says, ' I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.'^b Moreover, we ought to inquire whether our aim was right in all the duties we performed ; whether the glory of God, and the good of our own souls, was our great concern ; or whether we were influenced only by custom, and rested in a form of godliness without regarding the power of it, and loved the opinion and praise of men more than that of God. We ought to inquire whether our

minds, our affections, and outward gestures were grave, sedate, and composed, and we were ready to receive whatever God was pleased to impart in his word; whether we had a due sense of the divine perfections impressed on our spirits, and of the infinite distance which there is between the great God and us; whether we saw our need of the word, as Job says that ‘he esteemed the words of God’s mouth more than his necessary food;’^c and whether we have not only attended to every truth, but applied it to our own souls, as desiring to retain and improve it, and to make it the rule of our conversation. We are also to consider what we have received from God under his ordinances; whether we have had any sensible communion with him, any experiences of his love, or impressions of his power on our hearts; whether we have had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; whether, as we have gone from one ordinance to another, we have gone from strength to strength, our faith being more lively, our love to God increased, and our spiritual joy enlarged by every duty. We ought to inquire whether we have learned some doctrine from the word, which we understood not, or, at least, have been more confirmed in it, after some degree of wavering, or have been affected with some truth which we never saw such a beauty and glory in before; whether we have been melted under the word; whether it has been, as the prophet says, ‘like fire,’ or as ‘the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces;’^d or whether we can adopt the language of the disciples, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?’^e Now, we may comfortably conclude that we have received good under the ordinances, if we have been brought into an holy and lively frame of spirit; if the more we attend on them, the more our hearts are drawn forth to desire and delight in them; and especially if public duties fit us for private, and if, from the advantage that we receive from such opportunities, we are more disposed to walk with God in all the affairs and businesses of life, so that our whole conversation in this world receives a tincture from the benefit which we gain by that communion which we enjoy with God in his ordinances on his own day. Thus we are to take a view of our behaviour when engaged in public worship; and if we have received any spiritual advantage, the glory of it is to be given to God. But if, on the other hand, upon a strict and impartial inquiry into the frame of our spirits under the ordinances, we have, as too often happens, reason to complain of our deadness and stupidity under them; if we have not experienced that sensible communion with God which we have at other times enjoyed, or have reason to say that we wax worse, rather than better, under them; let us dread the consequence of this experience, lest it should issue in a judicial hardness of heart, and habitual unprofitableness, under the means of grace. We ought, in this case, to search out that secret sin which is as a root of bitterness springing up within us and troubling us, and to be humbled before God for it. We ought also to be still pressing after that special presence of God in his ordinances which will have a tendency to promote the life and power of religion in our souls.

We may add that, besides our dealing thus with ourselves in our private retirements, after having attended public worship, we are to endeavour to sanctify the sabbath in our families in the evening. Family worship is to be neglected no day; but on the sabbath it is to be engaged in with a particular relation to the duties which we have been performing in public. Accordingly, it is said, in one of the Answers we are explaining, that the charge of keeping the sabbath is directed to the governors of families, and other superiors; inasmuch as they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those who are under their charge, and not to hinder them, as many are prone to do, by employing them in those works which are foreign to the duties of the day. Masters of families are not only, on the sabbath day, to restrain immoralities in those who are under their care, but to lay their commands on them to engage with them in the worship of God, as they expect a blessing from him in all their undertakings. Thus Joshua resolves that ‘he and his house would serve the Lord;’^f and God speaks to the honour of Abraham, when he says, ‘I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord.’^g Superiors

have no power to dispense with any of God's commandments, or disengage their dependents from yielding obedience to them. But, on the other hand, they are obliged to see that all under their care perform their duty to God, as well as to them, and particularly that of sanctifying the sabbath. They are hence to restrain them from taking their own diversions, or finding their own pleasure in sinful recreations on the Lord's day; and to impress on them those suitable exhortations which may have a tendency to promote religion in their families; by which means they may hope for a peculiar blessing from God, in every relation and condition of life.

THE PROHIBITIONS AND MOTIVES OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXIX. *What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment, are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them, all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful, and by all needless works, words, and thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations.

QUESTION CXX. *What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?*

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work;" from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;" from the example of God, who, "in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day;" and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; "wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

QUESTION CXXI. *Why is the word "remember" set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?*

ANSWER. The word "remember" is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly because of the great benefit of remembering it; we being thereby helped, in our preparation to keep it; and in keeping it better, to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgement of religion; and partly because we are very ready to forget it; for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan, with his instruments, much labour to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.

The Sins Forbidden in the Fourth Commandment.

In discussing these Answers, we shall first consider the sins forbidden in this commandment.

1. The first of these are the omission of the duties required. Sins of omission are exceedingly prejudicial; because, though they have a tendency to harden the heart and stupify the conscience, yet they are, of all others, least regarded. As to the omission of holy duties on the sabbath day, it is a slighting and casting away of a great prize, put into our hands. Hence, in such a case, it will be said, 'Wherefore is there a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?'^h It may be observed also that the omission of holy duties on the sabbath is generally attended with the neglect of secret duties, and is an inlet to all manner of sins, and to a total apostacy from God.

2. The next thing forbidden in this commandment, is the careless performance of holy duties. We commit this sin when our hearts are not engaged in them, or when we content ourselves with a form of godliness, denying the power of it, and have no sense of God's all-seeing eye, or dread of spiritual judgments, being given up to barrenness and unprofitableness under the means of grace. Such a frame

of spirit as this, is always attended with a declining state of religion ; especially if we do not lament and strive against it. We may add, that we greatly sin when we profane the day by idleness ; either by sleeping away a great part of the morning of the day as though it were a day of sloth, and not of spiritual rest, designed for religious exercises ; or by drowsiness under the ordinances, as though we had no concern in them, whereby we give all about us to understand that we do, as it were, withdraw our thoughts from the work in which we pretend to be engaged. In some, indeed, this drowsiness proceeds very much from the weakness of their natural constitution. Such may be heavy and weary in duty, though they are not weary of it ; and they lament it, and are far from giving way to it, though they are, sometimes, unavoidably overtaken with it. In this case, though it cannot be excused from being a sin ; yet it is such, as, it is to be hoped, our Saviour will cover with the mantle of his love, or at least not charge upon them for their condemnation, though he may reprove them for it to bring them under conviction. Thus he dealt with his disciples, when he ‘came to them, and found them asleep.’ⁱ Though he tacitly reproves them, yet he does not infer that they were wholly destitute of faith ; but he charges their unbecoming carriage on the weakness of faith, and on their being overpowered by the infirmities of nature, when he says, ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’

3. There are other sins forbidden in the fourth commandment, which are particularly mentioned in this Answer. But these were insisted on, in considering how the sabbath is to be sanctified ; where we showed that, as we are not to do that which is in itself sinful, so we are to abstain from our worldly employments and recreations, and endeavour to guard against that vanity of thoughts which will have a tendency to alienate our affections from God, or hinder the success of ordinances.

The Reasons Annexed to the Fourth Commandment.

We proceed now to consider the reasons annexed to this commandment.

1. It is highly reasonable that we should sanctify the Lord’s day ; since God is pleased to allow us six days out of seven, for attending to our worldly affairs, and reserves but one to himself. This supposes that we are allowed to engage in our secular callings on other days. Hence, though it is brought in occasionally in this commandment, the duty which it implies belongs rather to the second table than to the first. In particular, it seems to be a branch of the eighth commandment. It is alleged, however, as a reason of our observing this commandment. Now, six days in seven is a very large allowance which God has made for our own employments. If, on the other hand, he had allowed us but one day in seven for them, and laid claim to six days to be set apart for religious worship, none would have had reason to complain ; since he, being the absolute Lord of our time, may demand what proportion of it he pleases. And they who are truly sensible of the real advantage which there is in attendance on all God’s holy institutions, and consider the sabbath as a privilege and blessing, would think it not only reasonable, but a great instance of the kindness of God to man, had this earth so much resembled heaven, that there should be a perpetual sabbath celebrated here, as there is there, where the saints count it their happiness to be engaged without interruption, in the immediate service of God.

It is objected by some that they cannot spare out of their worldly business a seventh part of time for religious duties, and that it is very hard for them to get bread for their families by all their diligence and industry. Others allege that the sabbath is their market-day, by selling things on which they get more than they do on other days. As to the former part of the objection, taken from the difficulty of persons subsisting their families, it may be replied that God is able to make up the loss of the seventh part of time, so that their not working in it shall not be a real detriment to those who are in the lowest circumstances in the world. God has ordered it so, that our observing his holy institutions shall not, in the end, prove detrimental to us. Thus when Israel was commanded to rest, and, every seventh year, not to cultivate their land for a whole year together, providence so

ⁱ Matt. xxvi. 40. 41.

ordered it that they were not sufferers by this institution, inasmuch as the year before brought forth enough for three years ;^k and when they were not to gather manna on the seventh day of the week, there was a double quantity rained upon them, which they gathered, the day before.¹ Why, then, may we not conclude that, by the blessing of God, what is lost by our not attending to our secular callings on the Lord's day, may be abundantly made up, by his blessing giving success to our endeavours on other days? As to that part of the objection in which persons pretend that the Lord's day is their market-day, in which they expect more advantage than on other days, it may be replied that if this be true it arises from the iniquity of the times ; and it should be a caution to us, not to encourage those who expose their wares to sale on the sabbath day, since, if there were no buyers, there would be no sellers, and this public and notorious sin would be prevented. We have a noble instance of this in Nehemiah, whose wisdom, zeal, and holy resolution, put an effectual stop to this practice, in his dealing with those who 'sold fish on the sabbath day.'^m First, 'he shut the gates of the city against them ;' and when he saw that they continued without the walls, hoping, by some means or other, to get into the city, or to entice some to come out to buy their merchandise, then he 'testified against them,' and commanded them not to continue without the walls, and by this means gave a check to their scandalous practice. Moreover, this gain of iniquity is not to be pretended as a just excuse for the breach of a positive commandment ; since, what is gotten in a way of presumptuous rebellion against God, is not likely to prosper, whatever pretence of poverty may be alleged to give countenance to it.

2. Another reason annexed to enforce our observance of the sabbath day, is taken from God's challenging a special propriety in it. Thus it is called 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God ;' a day which he has consecrated or separated to himself, and to which accordingly he lays claim. Hence, it is no less than sacrilege, or a robbing of him, to employ it in any thing but what he requires to be done in it.

3. God sets his own example before us for our imitation. Thus it is said, 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.' It is observed that God was six days in making the world ; whereas, had he pleased, he could have created all things with the same beauty and perfection in which they are at present, in an instant. But he performed this work by degrees, that he might teach us that whatever our hand finds to do, we should do in the proper season allotted for it. And as he ceased from his work on the seventh day, he requires that we should rest from ours, in conformity to his own example.

4. The last reason assigned for our sanctifying the sabbath, is taken from God's blessing and sanctifying it, or setting it apart for an holy use. To bless a day, is to give it to us as a particular blessing and privilege. Accordingly, we ought to reckon the sabbath a great instance of God's care and compassion to men, and a very great privilege, which ought to be highly esteemed by them. Again, for God to sanctify a day, is to set it apart from a common to an holy use. Accordingly, we ought to reckon the sabbath a day signalized above all others, with the character of God's holy day ; and as such, we ought to employ it in holy exercises, answerable to the end for which it was instituted.

Import of the Word 'Remember' in the Fourth Commandment.

It is observed in the last Answer we are explaining, that the word 'remember' is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment. From this circumstance we may observe our great proneness, through worldly business, and Satan's temptations, to forget the sabbath. We may learn also the importance of our observing the sabbath, without which irreligion and profaneness would universally abound in the world ; and that, on the other hand, in our observing this day as we ought to do, we may hope for grace from God, whereby we may be enabled to keep his other commandments.—Again, the word 'remember,' prefixed to this commandment, imports, not only that we are to call to mind that this particular day which God

^k Lev. xxv. 20—22.

¹ Exod. xvi. 22—24.

^m Neh. xiii. 16—21.

has sanctified is a sabbath, or to know what day it is in the order of the days of the week, but that we ought to endeavour to have a frame of spirit becoming the holiness of the day, or to remember it so as to keep it holy. It is certain that it is an hard matter, through the corruption of nature, to get our hearts disengaged from the vain amusements and entanglements of the present world; in consequence of which, we lose the advantage which would redound to us, by our conversing with God in holy duties. We are therefore to desire of him that he would impress on our souls a sense of our obligation to duty, and of the advantage which we may hope to gain from it. To induce us to act thus, let it be considered that the profanation of the sabbath is generally the first step to all manner of wickedness, and a making great advances to a total apostasy from God. Again, the observing of it is reckoned as a sign between God and his people. With respect to him, it is a sign of his favour; and with respect to man, it is a sign of their subjection to God, as their King and Lawgiver, in all his holy appointments. Moreover, we cannot reasonably expect that God should bless us in what we undertake on other days, if we neglect to own him on his day, or to devote ourselves to him, and by doing so discover our preferring him and the affairs of his worship before all things in the world.

Inferences from the Fourth Commandment.

1. What has been said in explaining this commandment may serve to confute those who think that the observance of days in general, or that the keeping of the first day of the week as a sabbath, is a setting up of the ceremonial law, without distinguishing aright between a ceremonial and a moral precept. For, how much soever the observance of the seventh day, might have a ceremonial signification as it was enjoined to Israel from mount Sinai, it is possible for the typical reference of it to cease, and yet the moral reason of it to remain in force to us; as the sabbath is a day appointed by God in which he is to be worshipped, so that we may have ground to expect his presence and blessing, while attending on him in his holy institutions.

2. Others are to blame who think that every day is to be kept as a sabbath, pretending that such a practice is most agreeable to a state of perfection. It is contrary, however, to God's allowing us six days for our own employment. Indeed, none who make use of this argument, do, in reality, keep any day as a sabbath, at least in such a way as they ought.

3. Others are guilty of a great error who think that the sabbath is, indeed, to be observed; but that there is no need of that strictness which has been inculcated, or of its being kept holy from beginning to end. Some suppose that the only design of God in instituting it, was, that public worship should be maintained in the world; and that, therefore, it is sufficient if they attend on it, without endeavouring to converse with him in secret.

4. What has been said, is directly contrary to the opinion of those who think that the Lord's day was a mere human institution; without considering, as has been hinted, that what the apostles prescribed respecting it, was by divine direction. This opinion, if it should prevail, would open a door to great carelessness and formality in holy duties, and would be an inducement to us to profane the day in various instances.

THE SUM OF THE SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW.

QUESTION CXXII. *What is the sum of the six commandments, which contain our duty to man?*

ANSWER. The sum of the six commandments, which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them do to us.

As the first table of the ten commandments respects our duty to God, so the other contains our duty to our neighbour. This is comprised in the general idea of

love ; which therefore is styled the sum of the following six commandments. It is included in our Saviour's words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ;'ⁿ and elsewhere, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'^o

Love to our Neighbour.

We are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. This implies a caution against a selfish temper ; as though we were born only for ourselves, or were obliged to do good to none else. Such selfishness is what the apostle reproves, when he says, 'Men shall be lovers of their own selves ;'^p that is, they shall study and consult the happiness, ease, and comfort of none but themselves.—Moreover, our loving our neighbour as ourselves, implies our using endeavours to promote the good of all whom we converse with ; and thereby rendering ourselves a blessing to mankind. It does not, indeed, exclude self-love, which it supposes to be a duty ; but obliges us to love others as well as ourselves, in things which relate to their spiritual and temporal good.

Here we may inquire whether we ought to love others better than ourselves ; or what the apostle intends when he says, 'Let each esteem other better than themselves ?'^q Now, it cannot be hereby meant that they who have attained a great measure of the knowledge of the truths of God, should reckon themselves as ignorant of or unstable in the doctrines of the gospel, as those who never made them the subject of their study and inquiry ; or that they who have had large experience of the grace of God, should conclude that they have no more experience of it than those who are unregenerate, and have not taken one step heavenward. But the meaning is, that the greatest saint should not think himself better than the least, any otherwise than as he has received more from the discriminating grace of God ; as the apostle says, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive ?'^r Indeed, such an one may see more sin in himself than he can see in any other ; and, therefore, may have reason to reckon himself, as the apostle says, 'the chief of sinners.'^s The best saints would have been as bad as the vilest of men, had they been left to themselves ; and it may be, some of those who have had less grace, have had fewer talents and opportunities of grace than the former have had, which they have improved better in proportion to what they have received, than the others have the many advantages which God has been pleased to bestow on them.

Our next inquiry may be, whether our love to our neighbour should extend so far that we should be willing, were it needful, to lay down our lives for them ; as it is said, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren ;'^t and, 'Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.'^u But by 'laying down our lives,' in these scriptures, is principally intended hazarding our lives, or exposing ourselves to the utmost danger, even of death itself, for others. Yet we are not to do this rashly, and at all times ; but only when God, who is the sovereign Lord of our lives, calls us to it. Nor ought this to be done for every one, but 'the brethren ;' especially for those who are more eminently useful in the church of God than ourselves or others. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'for a good man,' that is, one who is a common good, or a blessing to many others, 'one would even dare to die.' Moreover, our obeying this precept must be at times when, in exposing ourselves for the sake of others, we give our testimony to the gospel ; and, in defending them, plead the injured cause of Christ and religion.

Doing as we would be done by.

Loving our neighbour as ourselves is farther illustrated in this Answer, by doing to others what we would have them do to us. This is one of the most undeniable and self-evident truths contained in the law of nature. Whatever disputable mat-

ⁿ Matt. xxii. 39.
^r 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^o Chap. vii. 12.
^s 1 Tim. i. 15.

^p 2 Tim. iii. 2.
^t 1 John iii. 16.

^q Phil. ii. 3.
^u Rom. v. 7.

ters there may be as to other duties, this rule is allowed by all mankind. Many, indeed, do not conform their practice to it; and their acting so gives occasion to the injuries done between man and man. Yet the vilest of men, when they deliberate on their own actions, cannot but blame themselves for acting contrary to it. This Saul did when he said to David, ‘Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.’^x We conclude, then, that it is one of the first principles of the law of nature, and may well be called, as it is in this Answer, the sum of the commandments of the second table, or that to which they are all reduced. There are two things which we shall lay down, relating to this golden rule of doing to others as we would that they should do to us.

1. It is miserably neglected by a great part of the world. It is neglected by those who turn away their hearts from the afflicted; so as not to pity, help, or endeavour to comfort them in their distress. The psalmist was of another mind than these persons, when he said, ‘As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother. I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.’^y Moreover, this rule is broken by those who deny to others those natural, civil, or religious liberties which, by God’s appointment, they have a right to, or envy them the possession of these.

2. We are farther to inquire how this rule, of doing to others what we would have them do to us, may be of use in order to our right observing the commandments of the second table. The fifth commandment, which requires the performance of all relative duties, would be better observed, did superiors put themselves in the place of inferiors, and consider what they would then expect from them; and the same they ought to do to them. The same thing may be said with regard to the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments; which respect the life, the honour, and the wealth of others. If these are dear to us, ought we not to consider that they are so to others? And if we would not be deprived of them ourselves, how unreasonable is it for us to do any thing which may tend to deprive others of them? Again, if, according to the ninth commandment, our good name be so valuable, that we ought to maintain it, should not defamers, slanderers, and backbiters reflect that they do that to others which they would not have done to themselves? As to the tenth commandment, it forbids our uneasiness at, or being discontented with, the good of others, or our endeavouring to divest them of the possession of what God has given them in this world. Now, these things cannot be done by any persons who duly consider, how unwilling they would be to have what they possess taken away, to satisfy the covetousness or lust of others.

x 1 Sam. xxiv. 17.

y Psal. xxxv. 13—15.

THE RELATIONS OF LIFE.

QUESTION CXXIII. *Which is the fifth commandment?*

ANSWER. The fifth commandment is, "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

QUESTION CXXIV. *Who are meant by father and mother, in the fifth commandment?*

ANSWER. By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts, and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

QUESTION CXXV. *Why are superiors styled father and mother?*

ANSWER. Superiors are styled father and mother, both to teach them in all duties towards their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations, and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

QUESTION CXXVI. *What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?*

ANSWER. The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, equals.

The Meaning of 'Father and Mother' in the Fifth Commandment.

IN the fifth commandment, no other relations are mentioned but father and mother; yet it may be observed that by these all superiors in general are intended. Many are called fathers in scripture besides our natural parents. Superiors in age are so called. Thus it is said, 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.'^z They also are called fathers who are superior in gifts; and accordingly have been inventors of arts which have been useful to the world. Thus Jabal is said to be 'the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle,'^a that is, the first who made considerable improvements in the art of husbandry; and Jubal is said to be 'the father,' that is, the instructor 'of all such as handle the harp and organ,'^b or the first who made improvements in the art of music. Moreover, those are called fathers to whom we owe, under God, our outward prosperity and happiness. In this sense Joseph, though a subject, a young man, and, a little before, a prisoner, is called 'a father to Pharaoh;^c that is, he was an instrument to support his greatness, and preserve him from the inconveniences of a seven years' famine. Again, princes, great men, and heads of families, are called fathers. Thus Naaman was so called by his servants.^d Further, men of honour and usefulness in the church are so called. Thus when Elisha saw Elijah ascend into heaven, he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.'^e Joash, the king of Israel, used the same expression to Elijah, 'when fallen sick.'^f The apostle also takes by implication the name father to himself when he styles those to whom he had been made useful for their conviction, and enlightening in the doctrines of the gospel, 'My little children.'^g Finally, good kings and governors are called fathers. Thus it is said, 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and queens thy nursing-mothers.'^h

Why Superiors are styled Father and Mother.

We have an account, in one of the Answers we are explaining, of the reason why superiors are styled father and mother. This is, that they should behave towards their inferiors with the same love and tenderness as if they were natural parents. Authority is not only consistent with such love; but it ought to be exercised, by superiors towards inferiors, under the influence of this love. Thus Job, when in his prosperity, was, as it were, a common father to all who were under him.

^z 1 Tim. v. 1, 2.

^e 2 Kings ii. 12.

^a Gen. iv. 20.

^f Chap. xiii. 14.

^b Ver. 21.

^g Gal. iv. 19.

^c Chap. xlv. 8.

^h Isa. xlix. 23.

^d 2 Kings v. 13.

Accordingly, he says, 'I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him;'ⁱ and 'I was a father to the poor.'^k Ministers, also, who, in some respects, are superior in office to others, when their reproofs are mixed with tenderness and compassion towards the souls of men under their care, are compared to 'the nurse that cherisheth her children;' as 'being affectionately desirous, and willing to impart to them, not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, as being dear to them.'^l

The Bases and Nature of the Social Relations.

We have, in another of the Answers under our consideration, an account of the general scope of the fifth commandment; and, as it requires the duties to be performed by every one in their several relations, these are considered either as superiors, inferiors, or equals. There are several sorts of relations in which persons are styled superior or inferior to one another. There are relations founded in nature, as that of parents and children. There are such relations as are political, designed for the good of mankind, living together as members of the same commonwealth, in which every one has a right to his civil liberties, which are to be enjoyed by the one party, and defended by the other. Of this sort is the relation of magistrates and subjects. There is also a relation founded in mutual compact and agreement, respecting things to be done on the one side, and gratifications to be allowed on the other. Of this kind is the relation between master and servant.

The only difficulty which arises from the account we have of the obligation of persons to give honour to others, respects superiors honouring inferiors. Now, let it be considered that superiors are not obliged to show the same marks of honour to their inferiors, as inferiors are bound, by the laws of God and nature, to express to them. Yet there is a duty which the greatest men owe to the least. There is also a degree of honour which the lowest of men, as reasonable creatures or Christians, have, and which is put upon them by God; and this is to be regarded by those who are, as to their condition in the world, superior to them. Besides, the meanest and lowest part of mankind, are, in many respects, necessary and useful to those who are much their superiors; and are to be regarded by them in proportion to their being useful and necessary. Now, the performing of the duties which superiors owe to them, is called honouring them.

i Job xxix. 12.

k Verse 16.

l 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

RELATIVE DUTIES.

QUESTION CXXVII. *What is the honour that inferiors owe to their superiors?*

ANSWER. The honour which inferiors owe to their superiors, is, all due reverence, in heart, word, and behaviour; prayer, and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces, willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels, due submission to their corrections, fidelity to, defence, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honour to them and to their government.

QUESTION CXXVIII. *What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?*

ANSWER. The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them, envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections, cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage as proves a shame and dishonour to them and their government.

QUESTION CXXIX. *What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?*

ANSWER. It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body; and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honour to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.

QUESTION CXXX. *What are the sins of superiors?*

ANSWER. The sins of superiors are, beside the neglect of the duties required of them, and inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counselling, encouraging, or favouring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly, careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonouring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behaviour.

QUESTION CXXXI. *What are the duties of equals?*

ANSWER. The duties of equals are, to regard the dignity and worth of each other, in giving honour to go one before another, and to rejoice in each others' gifts and advancement, as in their own.

QUESTION CXXXII. *What are the sins of equals?*

ANSWER. The sins of equals are, beside the neglect of the duties required, the undervaluing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement or prosperity one of another, and usurping pre-eminence one over another.

The Duties of Inferiors to Superiors.

WE have in the first of these Answers an account of the honour which inferiors owe to their superiors. Here it will be necessary for us to premise some things concerning the measure of submission and obedience which inferiors owe to superiors, of what kind soever the relation be. When the authority with which God has invested superiors is abused, and the highest end of all sort of government, namely, the glory of God and the good of mankind, can never be attained, nor is, indeed, designed; or when the commands of superiors contradict the commands of God; we are then to obey him rather than men.^m Again, if we cannot obey the commands of superiors, as being unjust, we must pray that God would interpose, and would direct and overrule their authority, that it may not be abused by them, or become a snare or an occasion of sin to us. Though, however, we cannot yield obedience to them, in those things which are contrary to the laws of God, we are not discharged from our obligation to obey their commands, in other things which are agreeable to these laws; for we are not to suppose that the abuse of their authority in some instances, divests them of it in all respects.

1. In now proceeding to consider the duties which inferiors owe to their superiors, we notice first that of children to parents. This is founded on the law of nature. Under God, children derive their being from their parents; and they are obliged

to honour them from a sense of gratitude for that love, tenderness, and compassion which they have shown to them. The apostle says that this duty 'is right,'ⁿ that is, equitable and highly reasonable; and that it is 'well-pleasing unto the Lord.'^o This duty includes several things.

Children are sometimes to show the regard they have to their parents by outward tokens of respect. Thus Solomon, though his character, as a king, rendered him superior to all his subjects, expressed a great deal of honour by outward gestures to his mother. When she went to him to speak in the behalf of Adonijah, it is said that 'the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.'^p—Again, children ought to be ready to do their parents any acts of service which are not unlawful or impossible, when commanded by them. Thus Joseph obeyed Jacob, when he sent him to see where his brethren were, and what they were engaged in;^q and David obeyed Jesse, when he sent him to his brethren to the camp of Israel.^r This service is required more especially of children while they live with their parents, are maintained by them, and have not, by mutual compact, become servants to others.—Another duty which they owe, is, patient submission to their just reproofs, designed for their good. Thus the apostle says, 'We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.'^s—Further, they are to attend to and comply with their parents' wholesome advice and instruction. Thus it is said, 'A wise son heareth his father's instruction;'^t while, on the other hand, he is branded with the character of 'a fool' who 'despiseth it;'^u—and it is added, 'He that regardeth reproof is prudent.'^v—Moreover, children are to express their duty to their parents, by a thankful acknowledgment of past favours; and accordingly ought to relieve them, if they are able, when their indigent circumstances call for it, and endeavour to be a staff, comfort, and support to them, in their old age. This conduct is exemplified in the message which Joseph sent to Jacob, when he invited him to come down to him into Egypt.^x So when Ruth bare a son to Boaz, her mother Naomi's companions blessed her, and said, 'He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age.'^y

Children are also to pay deference to their parents' wishes, and, so far as it concerns the glory of God and their own future good, be advised by them in disposing of themselves in marriage, or any other important change of their condition and circumstances in the world. By this conduct they acknowledge their authority as superiors, and the care and concern which it is supposed they naturally have for their welfare as a part of themselves. Moreover, by this they pay a deference to their wisdom and judgment, as being superior in age, and probably, in wisdom, as well as relation. And this ought to be done out of a sense of gratitude for past favours received. Prudence too will, for the most part, dictate as much; especially when they depend on them for present comforts, or expect future advantages from them. This is also an expedient to maintain love and peace in families; which is often broken by the contrary practice. It may be recommended, likewise, from the laudable examples of it in good men. Thus Isaac submitted, as to his marriage, to the direction of his father Abraham; and Jacob^z was determined by the consent of Laban.^a Many more instances might be given to the same purpose. On the other hand, Esau's contrary practice is recorded in scripture as a vile instance of disobedience, 'which was a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah;'^b and it was, doubtless, an evidence that he had no regard to God or religion.—Nevertheless, this obligation is not without some exceptions. For we do not speak of parents who are so far deprived of judgment that they are not fit to determine this matter; nor of such as have divested themselves of the natural affection of parents, and, entertaining an ungrounded prejudice against some of their children, endeavour to expose them to ruin, that they may show more kindness to others. These forfeit that right which is otherwise founded in nature. Again, if parents, by refusing to comply with the desire of their children, plainly, in the judgment of the wisest of

n Ephes. vi. 1.

r 1 Sam. xvii. 17, 20.

x Gen. xlv. 9—11.

b Gen. xxvi. 35.

o Col. iii. 20.

s Heb. xii. 9.

y Ruth iv. 15.

p 1 Kings ii. 19.

t Prov. xiii. 1.

z Gen. xxix.

q Gen. xxxvii. 13.

u Chap. xv. 5.

a Chap. xxix.

men, obstruct their happiness, and the glory of God ; or if they give no reason for their not complying, or the reason given is contrary to the laws of God, or the common sense of all impartial judges ; especially if the affair took its rise from them, and afterwards they changed their mind, without sufficient ground ; these circumstances, without doubt, lessen, or, it may be, wholly take away the charge of sin in the child, in acting contrary to the will of his parents, and fasten the guilt on them. Further, the case is peculiar when children are so far from being dependent on their parents, that they depend on them. In this case, some deference and respect ought to be paid to them ; and as it is the children's duty, it may be their interest to render them. For we can hardly suppose that parents who depend on their children, would oppose their happiness in an affair which is apparently contrary to their own interest, if they did not think that they had sufficient reason for doing so. Their opposition, therefore, ought to be duly weighed, that it may be known, whether their advice is expedient to be complied with or not. And if, in this or any other instance, children are obliged to act contrary to the will of their parents, they ought to satisfy them that their choice is made, not out of any contempt of their authority, but from a conscientious regard to the glory of God, and that, in the opinion of the wisest and best of men, it is conducive to their happiness.

2. We shall now consider the duty of servants to their masters. This depends upon and is limited by the contract, which brought them into that relation, the not fulfilling of which renders them guilty of unfaithfulness. Nor is it less an instance of immorality for them to rob their masters of that time which they have engaged to serve, than it is to take away any part of their estate. But more particularly, servants ought to behave themselves in their calling with industry, being as much concerned for their master's interest as their own. In this manner Joseph, though a foreigner, and one who does not appear to have expected any reward for his service, but a maintenance, served Potiphar. In this manner also Jacob served Laban, though an unjust, severe, and unrighteous master.

This may lead us to inquire concerning the duty of servants, when their masters are froward, passionate, and unreasonable in their demands,—a circumstance which renders their service very irksome and unpleasant. But let it be considered that the master's passion, which is his sin, ought not to draw forth the corruption of his servant ; for, sin indulged by one, is no excuse for its being committed by another. The apostle Peter supposes the case under consideration, and gives this advice : ' Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.'^c Again, if the master's demands are unreasonable, the servant must know the extent of his contract and obligation ; and this he must, in justice, fulfil 'as unto Christ.'^d As for those services which are reckoned unreasonable, and not agreeable to the contract, these, if demanded, are rather to be referred to the determination of others, since persons are apt to be partial in judging in their own cause.

There seems, indeed, to be an exception to what we have stated, in some instances which we find in scripture of the unlimited obedience of servants under the ceremonial law ; which was not founded in nor the result of any contract between their masters and them. Accordingly, we read that persons became servants through poverty ; by reason of which, they sold themselves for the payment of debts. In this case, indeed, there was a kind of contract ; and the service to be performed ought, agreeably to the law of God and nature, to have corresponded with and been adjusted by the value of the debt contracted. Again, prisoners taken in war, were treated as servants, and, as such, sold to others. In this case, all the children that were born to them during their servitude, were the property of the master. These are called home-born servants, and had not so much liberty allowed them as those who were servants by mutual compact. Engagement by mutual compact is the method most common among us in which persons become servants ; and in this case both parties are bound by the terms of agreement.

3. We proceed to consider the duty of the members of a commonwealth or body

^c 1 Pet. ii. 18.

^d Eph. vi. 5—8.

pelitic, to their lawful magistrates. The apostle says, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.'^e Here we may observe the necessity of civil government. This will appear if we consider mankind in general as prone to be influenced by passions which are not entirely under the conduct of reason, and which, if no check were given to them, would prove injurious to societies. We observe also that God has, in his law, ordained certain punishments to be inflicted, with a design to restrain these corruptions, and to keep the world in order. Now, that this end may more effectually be answered, it is necessary that some should be set over others, to administer justice, in chastising the guilty, and defending the innocent. Without such an institution, the world would be filled with confusion, and men would commit sin with impunity, and more resemble brute creatures than beings who are endowed with reason, and are capable of moral government. Thus it is said, 'When there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.'^f

We proceed now to consider the advantage of civil government. It is in itself a blessing to mankind, when it does not degenerate into tyranny. Hence, good magistrates are a great instance of divine favour to a nation; as the queen of Sheba said to Solomon, 'Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.'^g And it is included among the blessings of the gospel-state, that 'kings should be their nursing-fathers, and their queens their nursing-mothers.'^h Such are said, as David was, to be 'raised up to fulfil the will of God.'ⁱ Nevertheless, civil government may be so administered that it may cease to be a blessing to the subjects. Thus Samuel describes the miserable state of a people, whose kings endeavour to establish their own greatness by enslaving and plundering their subjects, 'taking their sons and daughters' by force to be their servants, seizing their 'fields, their vineyards and olive-yards, and the tenth of their increase;' an expression which would oblige them to 'cry unto the Lord, because of their oppression.'^k We have an instance of this in Rehoboam, who was as remarkable for his want of conduct as his father was for his excelling wisdom. His rough and ill-timed answer to his subjects, in which he gave them to expect nothing else but oppression and slavery, issued in the revolt of ten tribes from his government.^l

From this different method of the administration of civil government, whereby it is rendered either a blessing or an affliction to the subjects, we may infer some important lessons. When that which is in itself a blessing, is turned into a curse, the event may be looked upon as a punishment inflicted by God for the iniquity of a people. Thus he says, 'I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.'^m—Again, we have great reason to be well-pleased with the government we are under, and to bless God for it. We are not exposed to the slavery which some other nations are; who have no laws but what result from the arbitrary will of their prince, and who can call nothing they have their own. This should make us prize the liberties which we enjoy; and be a strong motive to us to give due and cheerful obedience to our rightful and lawful sovereign, and all magistrates under him, who rule in righteousness, and are a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well.—Further, there is matter of reproof to the restless tempers of those who are under the mildest government; which is administered beyond all reasonable exception, our enemies themselves being judges. Indeed, they would confess this, were they not blinded with prejudice; which puts them upon betaking themselves to raillery, instead of better arguments. These are reproved by the apostle, who says, 'Some walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil' even 'of dignities.'ⁿ

We are now led to consider the honour which subjects owe to their lawful magistrates. They are highly to resent, and endeavour, in their several stations and

e Rom. xiii. 1.
i Acts xiii. 22.
n 2 Pet. ii. 10.

f Judges xxi. 25.
k 1 Sam. viii. 11—18.

g 2 Chron. ix. 7, 8.
l 1 Kings xii. 13, 14.

h Isa. xlix. 23.
m Hosea xiii. 11.

capacities, to check the insolence of those who make bold with the character of their magistrates and take the liberty to reproach them in common conversation. Such conduct is directly contrary to the law of God; which says, 'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber. For a bird of the air shall carry the voice; and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.'^o—Again, we are to support the honour of government, by paying those tributes which are lawfully exacted. Thus the apostle says, 'Render to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.'^p—Further, we are to pray for a blessing from God on the administration of our civil governors, that it may be under the divine direction, and tend to answer the great ends of government, namely, the glory of God, and the welfare of the subject.

Here I cannot but observe, that no one on earth has a power of discharging subjects from their obedience to their lawful governors, who endeavour to rule them according to the laws of God and nature, and those fundamental constitutions that are agreeable to these. Hence, it is a most detestable position advanced by the papists, that the pope has a power to excommunicate and depose sovereign princes; though it does not appear that he has received any such authority from Christ, but herein intermeddles with a province which does not belong to him. For princes do not receive their crowns from the pope; and therefore are not to be deposed by him. The assumption of such power by him is directly contrary to the temper of the blessed Jesus, and of the apostles and primitive Christians; who did not encourage their followers to depose heathen kings and emperors; but, on the other hand, exhorted them to 'submit to them in all things' consistent with the glory of God, and the good of mankind, 'not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake.'^q The church has no temporal sword committed to her, all her censures being spiritual. Temporal punishments are left in the hands of the civil magistrate; concerning whom, the apostle says, 'He is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'^r On the other hand, when speaking concerning those who have the government of ecclesiastical matters committed to them, he says, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.'^s

The arguments generally used by the papists, to support the cause of rebellion, and their usurped power to depose magistrates who are not of their communion, are very weak, and, most of them, such as may easily be answered. They allege the commission given by Christ, to Peter, 'Feed my sheep.'^t They pretend, that to 'feed,' is the same as to govern, and that this implies a power of punishing; which they suppose to be extended so far that the bishop of Rome may depose sovereign princes, as occasion offers; and they say that this power was given to Peter and his successors, which the popes of Rome pretend to be. But this commission given by Christ to Peter, to 'feed his sheep,' imports his feeding them with knowledge and understanding, and not lording it over God's heritage. Thus our Saviour says, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.'^u Moreover, their pretence that the bishops of Rome are Peter's successors, contains a claim of what they have not the least shadow of right to; and is, indeed, to place those in Peter's chair who are the greatest opposers of his doctrine.

Another argument they bring, tending to overthrow the power of the civil magistrate, is that, as the soul is more excellent than the body, and its welfare to be preferred in proportion; so the church is to take care of the spiritual concerns of mankind, to which all temporal concerns are to give place; and hence its power is greater than that of the civil magistrate. But this similitude does not prove the

^o Eccles. x. 20.
^s 2 Cor. x. 4.

^p Rom. xiii. 7.
^t John xxi. 17.

^q Verse 5.
^u Luke xxii. 25, 26.

^r Verse 4.

thing for which it is brought. Though it is allowed that the soul is more excellent than the body, yet its welfare is not to be secured by inflicting corporal punishments, such as persecutions and massacres; to abet and encourage which, is to cast a reproach on religion, and will tend very much to weaken the interest of Christ in the world. Moreover, the magistrate is ordained by God to defend the religious as well as the civil liberties of his subjects. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts that prayers be made 'for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life, in all godliness and honesty;^x and elsewhere we are exhorted to 'submit to governors, as unto them who are sent by the Lord, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.'^y

There is another argument which they make use of, taken from Azariah the priest's opposing king Uzziah, for intruding himself into the priest's office, in burning incense in the temple. Thus it is said, 'When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord, to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men. And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.'^z To support their argument taken from this scripture, they observe that the priests who went in with Azariah are said to be 'valiant men,' and so ready to commit any hostilities against the king. Azariah also threatens the king, when he tells him, 'it should not be for his honour;' and peremptorily commands him to be gone out of the temple. This, they suppose, is a flagrant instance of the power of the church over the civil magistrate, in all those things which interfere with what is sacred. Uzziah's sin, according to the law of that dispensation, was very great, and against an express command of God; who had ordered that none should officiate in the priest's office, but those who were of the family of Aaron. Again, Azariah and the rest of the priests did not attempt to depose him, but to prevent his going on in this sin; which would not be for his honour, as the high priest tells him. Nor does Azariah say this in a menacing way, as signifying that he would inflict some punishment on him, but as declaring what God would do against him, which would tend to his dishonour for this sin. Further, though the high priest, in God's name, commanded him to go out of the sanctuary; yet he did not lay violent hands on him, at least, till the leprosy was seen upon him. 'And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.'^a This they did, because a leper was not, according to the law of God, to enter into the congregation, inasmuch as he would defile it. Finally, he was not properly deposed; but, by this plague of leprosy, rendered incapable of reigning. Hence, 'he dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.'^b This arrangement was agreeable to the law of God, touching the leper; in which it is said, 'All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean. He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.'^c It may be observed, too, that his son managed the affairs of the kingdom for him. The use, therefore, which is made by the papists of this scripture, to give countenance to their doctrine of deposing princes, is foreign to its true sense.

There is one more scripture example which the papists bring, whereby they defend their practice, not only of deposing, but of murdering princes; and that is 2 Kings xi. 15, 'But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges; and him that followeth her, kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord.' But Athaliah was plainly an

x 1 Tim. ii. 2.
a 2 Chron. xxvi. 20.

y 1 Pet. ii. 14.
b Ver. 21.

z 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—18.
c Lev. xiii. 46.

usurper. Not only was she so by reason of her sex, since a woman was not to reign over Israel or Judah ; but, to establish herself in the throne, she killed all the seed royal, except Joash, who escaped, being hid from her fury in an apartment belonging to the temple.^d Again, what Jehoiada did in deposing her, was not only with a good design to set up the lawful heir, but was done by an express command from the Lord.^e Further, Joash was proclaimed, and anointed, and universally owned as king by the people, before Athaliah was slain.^f

The Sins of Inferiors against their Superiors.

We are now to consider the sins of inferiors against their superiors. These are expressed in general terms, in one of the Answers we are explaining ; namely, “neglecting the duties we owe to them, envying at, and contempt of their persons, places, and lawful counsels and commands, and all refractory carriage, that may prove a shame and dishonour to their government.” But, more particularly, inferiors sin against their superiors in divulging their secrets,—and that either as to what respects the affairs of their families, or their secular callings in the world ; in mocking, reproaching, or exposing their infirmities,—as it is said, ‘The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it ;’^g or in endeavouring to make disturbance or disorders in families or the commonwealth, through discontent with their station as inferiors, or a desire to rule over those to whom they ought to be in subjection. Servants sin, in neglecting to fulfil their contract or do the service which they engaged to perform, when they entered into that relation ; or in being disposed to perform the duties incumbent on them, only when they are under their master’s eye, having no sense of common justice, or their obligation to approve themselves to God, in performing the duties they owe to man. Thus the apostle exhorts servants to ‘be obedient to them which are their masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.’^h Children sin, by being unnatural to their parents, refusing or neglecting to maintain them if they need it, especially when they are aged. By this conduct they appear to have no sense of gratitude for past favours, nor regard to that duty which nature obliges them to perform.

The Duties of Superiors to Inferiors.

We are to consider the duties which superiors owe to their inferiors. Whatever circumstance of advancement one has above another in the world, is a peculiar gift of God, and should not give occasion to that pride of heart which is natural to fallen man, which puts him upon casting contempt on those who are below him. Much less should those who have advancement in the world oppress others who are in a lower station of life than themselves ; but they should endeavour to do good to them, and thereby glorify God. Indeed, as every relation is mutual, and calls for its respective duties ; so while superiors expect the duty which belongs to them from inferiors, it is equally just and reasonable that they should not neglect those duties which they themselves are obliged to perform in return, though these are of a different nature from those which they demand from them.

1. We shall first consider the duty of parents to children. This not only includes the using of their utmost endeavours to promote their children’s worldly advantage, as to their present or future condition in life ; but they ought to have a just concern for their spiritual welfare. The latter is a duty very much neglected, though it is incumbent on all parents who have a sense of God and religion upon their spirits. The apostle calls it ‘bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ⁱ When children are first capable of being instructed, or when they first take in the knowledge of common things ; then it is the parent’s duty to instil

d 2 Chron. xxii. 11.
g Prov. xxx. 17.

e Chap. xxiii. 3.
h Eph. vi. 5, 6.

f 2 Kings xi. 12—14.
i Eph. vi. 4.

into them those things which are spiritual. It is, indeed, a difficult matter to speak to them about divine things, so as to lead them into the knowledge of them, and requires a great measure of wisdom and faithfulness. One of the first duties which they owe to their children, is acknowledging God's right to them, putting them under his care, giving them up to him, hoping and trusting in Christ that he will bestow on them the saving blessings of the covenant of grace, and that in their early life. Moreover, as children soon discover themselves to have a corrupt nature, this ought to be checked and guarded against, as much as is in our power. All habits of sin are of an increasing nature, and though it is difficult to prevent them, we shall find it much more difficult to root them out.

Now, that we may instil into the minds of children the principles of religion, as soon as they are capable of receiving instruction, various things are to be observed. First, parents must take great care that they neither speak nor act any thing before their children, which may tend to corrupt their minds, or which may afford a bad example of pernicious consequence for them to follow; nor ought they to suffer those passions to break forth which may render them mean and contemptible in the eyes of their children, or give them occasion, by example, to indulge the same passions.—Again, they must take heed that they do not, on the one hand, exercise severity for trifles, or for those inadvertencies which children are chargeable with, or, on the other, too much indulge them in that incorrigibleness and profaneness which they sometimes see in them.—Further, they must separate from them all companions or servants from whom they may imbibe the principles of sin, and oblige those who have the immediate care of their education to instil into them the principles of religion, and, at the same time, to recommend to them the pleasure, beauty, and advantage of holiness in all, but especially in young ones.—Further, the examples which we have, either in scripture, or our own observation in the world, of those who have devoted themselves to God and been early religious, are to be frequently inculcated for their imitation, with all the affecting and moving expressions which it is possible for the parents to use, and with a particular application of these examples to their children's case. On the other hand, the miserable consequences which have attended persons neglecting to embrace the ways of God in the days of their youth, and the sore judgments which have often followed, are also to be set before them; as it is said, 'His bones are full of the sin of his youth.'^k—Again, reproofs for sin are to be given, with a zeal and concern for the glory of God, and yet with such affection as may convince children that, in those things in which they are ready to think their parents their enemies, they appear to be their greatest friends.—Moreover, they who have the care of children, ought, on the one hand, to take heed that they do not lead them into, or give them occasion to rest in, a formal or external appearance of religion; and, on the other hand, they are not to use any methods which may induce them to think that a burden or a reproach which they ought to esteem their delight and honour.—Further, those opportunities are more especially to be embraced, in which instructions are most likely to be regarded by them; as when they are inquisitive about divine things. An inquisitive state of mind should give the parent occasion to be particular in explaining to them matters about which they make inquiry. Thus God commands Israel, 'When thy son asketh thee in time to come, What mean the testimonies and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord thy God commanded you? say unto him, we were Pharaoh's bondsmen;'^l and so they were to relate to their children those dispensations of providence towards them which gave occasion to these statutes which he had appointed.—Finally, parents should let their children know that their obedience to God's commands will always entitle them to the greatest share in their affection, that this may be a motive and inducement to their performing it.

2. We are now to consider the duty which masters owe to their servants. They ought to recommend the good ways of God to them, endeavouring to persuade them to be religious; and, by their exemplary conversation in their families, whereby they adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, afford them an additional

^k Job xx. 11.

^l Deut. vi. 20, 21.

motive to become so. They ought likewise to encourage religion in their servants, as well as diligence and industry. For, as the one tends to the advantage of those to whom their service is due; the other tends to the glory of God, and the good of the souls of those who are found in the practice of it. Masters should also endeavour to instruct their servants in the principles of religion, especially if ignorant. Moreover, they should allow them sufficient time for religious duties; which, if needful, ought to be taken out of that time in which they would otherwise be employed in their service. This they ought to do, considering that the best Christians are likely to make the most faithful servants.

3. We are now to consider the duty of magistrates towards their subjects. They ought to endeavour to promote their liberty, safety, and happiness, by the justice and clemency of their administration. Thus it is said, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'^m By this means they will lay their subjects under the highest obligation to duty and obedience; and the respect which they have from them, will render the station in which they are more agreeable. They ought also to defend the rights of subjects, when injured, against their oppressors; that they may appear to be, as it were, their common fathers, to whom they have recourse in all difficulties, and from whom they find redress. They ought farther to encourage and support the common design of Christianity, by suppressing irreligion and profaneness, and every thing which is a scandal to the Christian name, or a reproach to a well-ordered government.

The Sins of Superiors against Inferiors.

We are now led to consider the sins of superiors. One sin in their behaviour towards their inferiors, is pride and haughtiness. They commit this when they treat those who are below them with contempt and disdain; as though, because they are not, in many respects, their equals, they were not their fellow-creatures. This sin discovers itself either in reproachful words or actions. Thus the Pharisees treated those whom they apprehended inferior to them in gifts or station in the church, with contempt; so that they often made use of that aphorism, 'This people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.'ⁿ—Another sin of superiors is, when masters exact severe and unmerciful labour, beyond what is reasonable, of their servants. This is little better than the oppression of the Egyptian task-masters; who commanded the Israelites to make brick without straw,^o and beat them, and dealt severely with them, because they could not fulfil their unreasonable exactions.

Sin is committed by those who, being princes or generals, exercise inhuman cruelty, contrary to the law of nature and nations, towards their conquered enemies, when they have them in their power. This David seems to have been charged with, as a blemish in his reign; when he put the men of Rabbah, after he had conquered them, 'under saws, and under harrows of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kilns. Thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.' Such conduct seems hardly justifiable by martial law, and therefore must be reckoned a failing in him; unless indeed the Ammonites had done something extraordinary to deserve it, or had used Israel in a similar manner; for in that case it might be reckoned a just reprisal upon them.^p We may add, that magistrates do not behave to their subjects as they ought, and therefore commit sin, when they inflict punishment beyond what the law directs, or the crime deserves. Small offences are not to be punished with death, as capital crimes are; since the punishment must be greater or less, in proportion to the crime. Thus God enjoined a certain number of stripes for some crimes committed; and if the rulers inflicted a greater number, 'their brother would seem vile unto them,'^q that is, they would treat him with greater severity than the nature of the crime demanded.

Again, superiors sin, when they take advantage of the necessities of the poor, in buying or selling. This is called a 'grinding the faces of the poor.'^r—Further, masters or parents sin, in giving undue correction to their servants or children for

m 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.
p 2 Sam. xii. 31.

n John vii. 49.
q Deut. xxv. 2, 3,

o Exod. v. 15, 16.
r Isa. iii. 14, 15.

small faults ; as when they punish the neglect of some punctilios of respect which are due to them, with greater severity than they do open sins against God ; or when they are transported with unreasonable passion for trifles. By this conduct they render themselves hated by their dependents, and provoke them to wrath, rather than promote the end of chastisement, which is the glory of God and their good. This the apostle forbids parents to do;^s and he also speaks of ‘the fathers of our flesh chastising us after their own pleasure,’^t as being disagreeable to the divine dispensations, and consequently not to be justified in those who practise it.—Again, superiors sin, when they command those things of their inferiors which are in themselves sinful, which they cannot in their consciences comply with ; or when they demand those things which are impossible, and are enraged against them for not doing them.—Finally, superiors sin, when they surmise that their inferiors have committed a fault, which they resent and punish, without suffering them to vindicate themselves, though they request this favour in the most submissive way. This is to extend their authority beyond the bounds of reason.

The Duties of Equals.

We shall now consider the duties of equals. They ought to encourage and strengthen the hands of one another in the ways of God ; which is the great end and design of Christian societies. They ought to sympathize with one another in their weakness, warning and helping each other, when exposed to temptations or overcome by them. They ought to defend one another when reproached by the enemies of God and religion. They ought to love one another, and rejoice in each other’s welfare. Finally, they ought to withdraw from the society of those who are a reproach to the good ways of God, or endeavour to turn them aside from them.

The Sins of Equals.

We shall now consider the sins of equals. One sin is to entertain unjust and unfriendly quarrels, contrary to that love which ought to be amongst brethren.—Another sin is to affect or usurp pre-eminence over one another ; as Diotrephes did, whom the apostle speaks of, who ‘loved to have the pre-eminence amongst them.’^u Christ’s disciples themselves were sometimes liable to this charge ; especially when ‘there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest.’^x This our Saviour is so far from commending in them, that he reproves them for it.—Again, it is a great sin, when equals endeavour to make breaches amongst those who are otherwise inclined to live peaceably with one another. This is the wretched employment of tale-bearers, busy-bodies, make-bates, and slanderers, who delight to raise and propagate false reports ; as the psalmist supposes some inclined to do, who are distinguished from those who ‘do not backbite with their tongue, nor take up a reproach against their neighbour,’^y &c. This sin is reckoned one of those things which the Lord hates.^z—Further, equals are guilty of sin, when they insult and take occasion to expose their brethren, for those weaknesses and infirmities which they see in them, not considering that they also are liable to the same themselves.—Finally, they are guilty when they endeavour to ensnare and entice others to sin. This vile practice Solomon takes notice of ;^a and he cautions those who are tempted, against consenting to or complying with those who entice them.

^s Eph. vi. 4.

^x Luke xxii. 24.

u.

^t Heb. xii. 10.

^y Psal. xv. 3.

^z Prov. vi. 19.

^u 3 John 9.

^a Chap. i. 10, 15.

THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXXXIII. *What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment the more to enforce it?*

ANSWER. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and their own good, to all such as keep his commandment.

THE reasons annexed to the fifth commandment are included in the promise of long life to such as keep it. It is inquired by some, whether this promise is to be applied to none but the Israelites; since there is mention of the land which the Lord gave them, namely, Canaan. Now, though the Israelites might make a particular application of it to themselves; yet it extends to men in all ages and places. Accordingly, the apostle Paul, mentioning this commandment, and the promise annexed to it, instead of those words, 'That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' uses a mode of expression which is applicable to us as well as them, 'That thou mayest live long on the earth.'^b

1. Here we may inquire whether this promise be made good as to the letter of it, to all who keep this commandment; especially as we find, that, according to the common methods of providence, some good men live but a short time in this world, while the wicked often live to a great age. That the lives of some good men have been short, needs not be proved. Abijah, the best of Jeroboam's family, in whom some good thing was found towards the Lord God of Israel, died when a child.^c Josiah, who was one of the best of the kings that reigned over Judah, lived but thirty-nine years; for it is said that 'he was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years.'^d Enoch excelled all the patriarchs who lived before the flood, and was more honoured than they in being translated to heaven, without dying; yet he continued but a little while in this world, if we compare the time he lived here with the time which men generally lived before the deluge. He lived but three hundred and sixty-five years; while several others are said to have lived above nine hundred years. Joseph, also, who was the most remarkable for showing honour to parents, and performing the duties belonging to other relations, of any we read of in scripture, lived but an hundred and ten years;^e while Levi, who had been a reproach to his father, and a dishonour to the family in general, lived an hundred thirty and seven years.^f

2. We shall now consider how such dispensations of providence may be accounted for, consistently with the promise annexed to this commandment. Now, it may be observed that, when God takes his saints out of the world when young, his doing so is sometimes a peculiar instance of compassion to them, in taking them from the evil to come. Thus Josiah died, as was but now hinted, when young; but death was in mercy to him, that he might not see the evil which God would bring on Judah for their sins.^g Again, God's people are, at their death, possessed of a better world, which is the best exchange; so that, were the matter referred to their own choice, they would choose heaven before the longest life, and the best advantages they can enjoy in this world. Further, old age is not a blessing, unless it be adorned with grace. 'The hoary head is,' indeed, 'a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness';^h but not otherwise. Good men are not destroyed by the blast of God's wrath; but gathered, like a shock of corn, when fully ripe. They are meet for, and then received into, a better world. Hence, 'the child' dying in Christ is said 'to die an hundred years old';ⁱ while 'the sinner, being an hundred years old, is accursed.'

3. We shall now inquire how far, or in what respects, we are to hope for and desire the accomplishment of the promises of temporal good things. Temporal good things are to be desired, not ultimately for themselves, but as subservient to the glory of God. And long life in particular is a blessing, so far as it affords more

^b Eph. vi. 2, 3.
^f Exod. vi. 16.

^c 1 Kings xiv. 12, 13.
^g 2 Kings xxii. 20.

^d 2 Kings xxii. 1.
^h Prov. xvi. 31.

^e Gen. i. 26.
ⁱ Isa. lxx. 20.

space to do service to the interest of Christ in the world. They are to be desired, also, with an entire submission to the will of God, and with a resolution to acknowledge that he is righteous, and to magnify his name though he deny them to us, considering that he knows what is best for us, and may do what he will with his own. We are further to desire that God would give us temporal good things in mercy, as pledges of eternal happiness, and not in wrath. Thus the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'^k

4. We shall now inquire with what frame of spirit we ought to bear the loss of temporal good things, which we have been encouraged by God's promise to hope for. Here let it be considered that, if God does not fulfil his promise in the way and manner which we expect, in granting us temporal good things; yet we must justify him, and condemn ourselves; for none can say that he does not forfeit all blessings daily. We are hence to say, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar. He is a God of infinite faithfulness; but we are unfaithful, and not steadfast in his covenant.' Again, we are not to conclude that our being deprived of temporal good things which we expected, is a certain sign that we have no right to or interest in those better things which accompany salvation; as the wise man says, 'No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him.'^l Further, we are to reckon the loss of temporal good things as a trial of our faith and patience; and endeavour, under such disappointments, to make it to appear that the world was not the main thing we had in view, but that Christ and spiritual blessings in him were the spring of all our religion.

5. It may farther be inquired what those things are which tend to make a long life happy, and for which alone it is to be desired. Life is sometimes attended with miseries which induce a believer to desire to depart and be with Christ, as the weary traveller desires rest. Now, though, in the promise annexed to the fifth commandment, we have no mention of any thing but long life; yet the apostle, when explaining it, adds that those who keep it shall have a prosperous life, without which long life would not be so great a blessing. Thus he says, 'That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth.'^m Now, there are three things which tend to make a long life happy. First, experience of growth in grace, in proportion to our advances in age, according to that promise, 'They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.'ⁿ Secondly, a retaining of our natural abilities, and of that strength and vigour of mind which we formerly had. This some are deprived of, through the infirmities of old age; and so they may be said to outlive themselves. It was a peculiar blessing which God granted to Moses, concerning whom it is said, 'He was an hundred and twenty years old when he died,' and yet 'his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.'^o Thirdly, old age is a blessing when our usefulness to others, in our day and generation, is continued. Thus Joshua died an old man; but it was a peculiar blessing that he was useful to the end. For in the very close of his life 'he made a covenant with the people in Shechem;'^p and laid strict commands on them to behave themselves towards God as they ought to do.

^k Psal. iv. 6.

ⁿ Psal. xcii. 14.

^l Eccl. ix. 1.

^o Deut. xxxiv. 7.

^m Eph. vi. 3.

^p Josh. xxiv. 25. compared with 29.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXXXIV. *Which is the sixth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill."

QUESTION CXXXV. *What are the duties required in the sixth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavours to preserve the life of ourselves, and others, by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defence thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit, a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labour, and recreations, by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness, peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behaviour, forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil, comforting and succouring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

QUESTION CXXXVI. *What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge, all excessive passions, distracting cares, immoderate use of meat, drink, labour, and recreations; provoking words, oppressing, quarrelling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

The Duties Enjoined in the Sixth Commandment.

IN explaining this commandment, we shall first consider the positive part of it, or the duties required in it. We should use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others; and consequently we should avoid all those passions, and other things, which may afford an occasion to take it away, and live in the constant exercise of the duties of temperance and sobriety, as to what respects ourselves, and of meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness of injuries, as to what concerns others. In this commandment it is supposed that life is the most valuable blessing of nature. Hence, to take it away, is to do the utmost injury which can be attempted against us. The valuableness of the life of man appears in four things. First, it is the result of the union of the soul with the body; which is the principle of those actions that are put forth by us as intelligent creatures. Hence, life is to be esteemed in proportion to the excellency of the soul; which is the noblest part of the creation, angels excepted. Again, nothing can compensate or satisfy for the taking away of the life of man, how much satisfaction soever may be given for the loss of other things. Further, man is the subject of the divine image; which supposes us to have a more excellent life than any other creatures in this lower world, and is assigned as a reason of our obligation to preserve life.^a Finally life is given and continued to us, in order that the most valuable ends may be attained, conducive to the glory of God, the advancement of religion in the world, and the promoting of our everlasting happiness. We may hence take an estimate of its excellency; and it contains the highest motive to us, to yield obedience to this commandment.

This leads us to consider the means which we are to use, to preserve our own lives, and the lives of others. As to the preservation of our own lives, we are not to rush presumptuously into danger of death, without a divine warrant; for to do so is to be prodigal of life. We are also to exercise sobriety and temperance, avoiding gluttony, drunkenness, lust, and all exorbitant passions; which tend to impair the health, as well as defile the conscience. Moreover, when occasion requires it, we are to have recourse to the skill of physicians, and make use of those medicines which may conduce to repair the weakness and decays of nature. As to our endeavours to preserve the lives of others, we are to caution them against those things which would tend to destroy their health, and, by degrees, their lives. We must also discover and detect all secret plots and contrivances which may be directed

against them; and we are to support and relieve those who are ready to perish by extreme poverty, yea, though they were our enemies.^r We are also to defend those who are in imminent danger of death.^s Nevertheless, we must not use unwarrantable means, though it were to save our own lives. In times of persecution, for example, we are not to renounce the truths of God, or give occasion to the common enemy to revile them, or speak evil of them, by avoiding to suffer for the cause of Christ. Preferring a profession of the truth to the preservation of life, was that noble principle by which the martyrs whom the apostle speaks of were actuated. 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance;' ^t that is, when they were exposed to the most exquisite torments, and their lives offered them if they would deny Christ, they would not accept of deliverance on so dishonourable terms. Neither are we, at any time, to tell a lie, or do that which is contrary to truth, though it were to save our lives.

The Sins Forbidden in the Sixth Commandment.

We shall now consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These are either the taking away of life, or the doing of that which has a tendency to take it away.

1. It is unlawful to take away the life of another. But this is to be considered with some exceptions or limitations. Life may be taken away in lawful wars. Thus we read of many wars begun and carried on, and much blood shed in them, by God's direction, and with his approbation and blessing; on which account, it is said that 'the war was of God.'^u Yet, when wars are proclaimed merely to satisfy the pride and avarice of princes, as in Benhadad's war against Ahab,^x or in the war of the Romans on the countries round about them, merely to enlarge their own dominions by ruining others, or in those which the devil excites and antichrist carries on against the church, for their faithfulness to the truth;^y the law of God is broken, and all the blood shed in them is a breach of this commandment.—Again, it is no violation of this commandment, to take away the life of offenders, guilty of capital crimes, by the hand of the civil magistrate; for the doing of this is elsewhere commanded, and magistrates are appointed for that end.^z [See Note T, page 386.]—Further, it is no breach of this commandment, when a person kills another without design, or the least degree of premeditated malice. Yet the utmost caution ought to be used, that persons may not lose their lives through the carelessness and inadvertency of others.—Moreover, in some instances, a person may kill another in his own defence, without being guilty of the breach of this commandment. But this is to be considered with certain limitations. If there be only a design or conspiracy against our lives, but no immediate attempt made to take them away; we are to defend ourselves, by endeavouring to put him who designed the execrable act out of a capacity of hurting us; and we are to do this by having recourse to the protection of the law, whereby he may be restrained, or we secured. This was the method which Paul took, when the Jews had bound themselves with an oath to slay him. He informed the chief captain of their conspiracy, and had recourse to the law for his safety.^a If, again, there be a present attempt made against our lives, we should rather choose to disarm the enemy, or flee from him, than take away his life. But if this cannot be done, so that we must either lose our own life or take away his, we do not incur the least guilt, or break this commandment, if we take away his life to preserve our own; especially if we were not first in the quarrel, nor gave occasion to it by any injurious or unlawful practices.

Here it may be inquired whether it be lawful for two persons to fight a duel, upon a set challenge or provocation given. Now, when a war between two armies may be terminated, and the shedding of much blood prevented by a duel, it is not unlawful; provided it be by mutual consent, and with the approbation of those on both sides who have a right of making war and peace; and if the matter in con-

^r Rom. xii. 20; Job xxxi. 19, 20, 22.

^t Heb. xi. 35. ^u 1 Chron. v. 22.

^y Rev. xii. 17; Chap. xiii. 7.

^a Acts xxiii. 21.

^s Psal. lxxx'i. 3, 4; Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

^x 1 Kings xx. 1, et seq.

^z Deut. xvii. 8—10; Rom. xiii. 4.

troversy may be thus decided, without tempting providence. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the duel fought between David and Goliath.^b It is unlawful, however, for two persons, each seeming too prodigal of his life, to give and accept a challenge, and in prosecution of it to endeavour to put an end to each other's life, merely to gratify their own passion or pride. This, though falsely called honour, will, in reality, render them vile in the eyes of God, and notoriously guilty of the breach of this commandment.

Here we may consider the wicked practice of those who have obliged the poor wretches, who were under their command, to murder one another for their diversion. This Joab and Abner did, when they said, 'Let the young men arise and play before us; and every one thrust his sword in his fellow's side.'^c There is also an unlawful diversion, which, though not altogether so barbarous and cruel, is, in some respects, a breach of this commandment, namely, when persons fight with and wound one another, without design of killing, merely to get a little money, while entertaining a number of unthinking persons with their folly. In this case they that fight, and they that look on, are equally guilty.^d Thus concerning the sin of killing one another.

We shall now explain two or three difficulties which occur in scripture, relating to the actions of some good men, who seem to have been guilty of the breach of this commandment, but really were not so. It is inquired, whether Elijah was chargeable with the breach of it in destroying Baal's prophets, when 'he ordered that none of them should escape; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.'^e Now, it may be observed that it was not a small inoffensive error which these prophets of Baal were punished for; but apostacy from God. That the persons deserved the punishment they received appears from various considerations. They were the advisers and ringleaders of all Israel's idolatry, and the abettors and principal occasion of the violent persecution which then raged against the Lord's prophets and true worshippers. Again, had they only been false prophets, and not persecutors, they were, according to the law of God, to be put to death.^f Further, their punishment was inflicted after a solemn appeal to God, and an answer from heaven by fire, which determined, not only who was the true God, but who were his prophets, and consequently whether Elijah deserved death as an impostor, or Baal's prophets. Moreover, Ahab himself was present, and all his ministers of state, who had a right to execute justice on false prophets; and, it is highly probable, that they consented to their death, and that many of them had an immediate hand in it. Their acting thus might be occasioned by a sudden conviction in their consciences, proceeding from the miracle which they had just before observed, or from the universal cry of the people against the false prophets. The occurrence, therefore, was plainly of the Lord, to whom Elijah brought a great deal of honour, and was far from being chargeable with the breach of this commandment.

It is farther inquired whether Abraham's offering Isaac was a breach of this commandment. This is proposed as a difficulty by those who do not pay that deference to divine revelation which they ought, nor consider that God cannot command any thing which is contrary to his perfections, and that his people do not sin in obeying any command which is given by him.—However, that this matter may be set in a just light, let it be considered that God, who is the sovereign Lord of life, may take it away when and by whom he pleases. Hence, Isaac had no more reason to complain of any wrong or injury done him by God, in ordering his father to sacrifice him, than any one else has who dies by his immediate hand, in the common course of providence.—Again, Abraham could not be said to act with the temper and disposition of a murderer; which those have who are guilty of the breach of this commandment, who kill persons in a passion or out of envy or malice, being void of all natural affection and brotherly love. Abraham acted plainly in obedience to God's command. His hand was lifted up against one whom he loved as well as his own life, and it may be better; and, doubtless, he would rather have been, had God so ordered it, the sacrifice than the offerer.—Further, he acted, as

^b 1 Sam. xvii.

^c 1 Kings xviii. 40.

^d 2 Sam. ii. 14—16.

^e Deut. xiii. 6—9.

^f Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

is more than probable, with Isaac's full consent. Hence some think that Isaac's faith was no less remarkable in the affair than that of Abraham. His willingness to be offered, evidently appears, from the fact that Abraham was in his feeble and declining age, and Isaac in his full strength ; for it was not a little strength which was sufficient to carry wood enough to answer this occasion, which we read Isaac did.^g Besides, if Isaac had resisted, none was at hand to assist Abraham against him ; and, doubtless, he would have striven in this matter as one who desired to be overcome. We must suppose, therefore, that the transaction was so far from being a breach of this commandment, that it was one of the most remarkable instances of faith in scripture ; and that God's design in ordering it was, that it might be a type whereby he would lead Abraham into the glorious mystery of his not sparing his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Christ's willingness to lay down his life a ransom for his people.

Some charge Moses with having been guilty of the breach of this commandment, in killing the Egyptian.^h But to vindicate him from this charge, let it be considered that the Egyptian whom he slew, not only smote an Hebrew, but did so wrongfully. As is observed in Acts vii. 24, there was no offence given or just reason for this injurious treatment ; and to oppress or abuse one who is in a miserable condition, as the Hebrews were at that time, is an heinous crime in God's account.—Moreover, to 'smite,' in scripture, is often taken for to 'slay ;' so that it is not improbable, that the Egyptian slew the Hebrew ; or if he did not, the injury he inflicted might be such as deserved death. Now, this punishment would have been executed in another manner, had not Israel been denied, at that time, the protection of the law.—Again, Moses was, at this time, raised up and called by God, to be a ruler and a judge, to defend the cause of his oppressed people ; and in this action he first began to fulfil his commission. The people, indeed, refused to own him, and seemed to join with those who designed him evil for his interference ; but for this reason their deliverance was put off forty years longer, while he was an exile in the land of Midian.ⁱ Now, to slay a public enemy and oppressor, and, as is probable, one who had forfeited his life, and to do this with a commission from God to act as a ruler and a judge over his people, cannot be reckoned a breach of this commandment. Thus concerning the violation of this commandment, as including the murdering of our neighbour.

2. This commandment is notoriously broken by those who lay violent hands on themselves. We have in scripture an account of no good man who was ever suffered to do this, but only of men of the most infamous character, such as Saul, Ahithophel, Judas, and others. This is a sin which is attended with many aggravations. It is to act as though our lives were at our own disposal. But they are to be considered as a talent which we are intrusted with by God to improve for his glory ; and he alone has a right to dispose of them at his pleasure.—Again, self-murder argues, and arises from, the highest discontent and impatience under the hand of God ; which is contrary to that temper which we ought to exercise as Christians, who profess subjection to him.—Further, it is contrary to nature and that principle of self-preservation which God has implanted in us. Indeed, he who does it, not only acts below the reason of a man, but does that which even brutes themselves are not inclined to.—Moreover, it is a giving place to and a gratifying of the devil, who acts agreeably to his character, as a murderer from the beginning, when he tempts men to destroy both soul and body at once.—Again, it is a presumptuous and bold resolving that, whatever measure of duty God has prescribed for us to fill up in this world, we will serve him no longer. If martial law punishes deserters with death, is there not a severe punishment due to those who do, as it were, desert the service of God by self-murder ? Nothing is more certain than this, that if duty be enjoined by God, the time in which it is to be performed is also fixed by him, and not left to our own determination.—Further, self-murder is a rushing hastily into eternity, not considering the consequence, nor the awful tribunal of Christ, before which they must immediately appear, and give an account of this, as well as other sinful actions of life.—Finally, self-murder is done with such a frame

g Gen. xxii. 6.

h Exod. ii. 11, 12.

i Acts vii. 24, 25, compared with 30.

of spirit, that a person cannot by faith commit his soul into the hands of Jesus Christ; for to do so requires a better temper of mind than any one can be supposed to have who murders himself.

Here it may be inquired, since, as was before observed, no good man was ever guilty of this crime, whether Samson did not break this commandment in pulling down the house upon his own head, as well as upon the Philistines. Now, Samson's life, at this time, was a burden to himself, useless to his brethren, a scorn to the open enemy, and an occasion of their ascribing their deliverance to their idol, and probably would soon have been taken away by them. These circumstances, though they would not, in themselves, have been sufficient to justify this action; yet might justify his desire that God would put an end to his life, and release him out of this miserable world; especially if the event would redound more to his glory than any thing he could do for the future, or had done in the former part of his life. Besides, it plainly appears that God, in answer to his prayer, not only gave him leave to take away his own life, together with the lives of his enemies, but also wrought a miracle to enable him to do it. It was therefore a justifiable action, and no breach of this commandment.^k

3. We shall now consider the heinous aggravation of the sin of taking away the life of another unjustly, and the terrible judgments which those who are guilty of it have ground to expect. According to the divine law, this sin is to be punished with death, by the hand of the civil magistrate.^l Thus Joab, who had deserved to die for murders formerly committed, was slain according to David's order by Solomon; though he sought protection by taking hold of the horns of the altar.^m Many other crimes might be expiated by sacrifices, which God ordained should be offered for that end; but no satisfaction was to be accepted for this sin but the blood of the murderer.ⁿ And it is a matter of dispute with some whether kings, who may pardon many crimes by virtue of their prerogative, can, according to the laws of God, pardon murder, without being supposed to extend their clemency beyond its due bounds?—Again, God often gives up those who are guilty of the sin of murder to the terrors of a guilty conscience, which is a kind of hell upon earth; as in the instances of Cain, Lamech, and others.^o—Further, such are followed with many remarkable instances of divine vengeance; so that the blast of providence attends all their undertakings. Thus David, after he had killed Uriah, was followed with such rebukes of providence, that the latter part of his life was rendered very uneasy; and what the prophet foretold was fulfilled, that 'the sword should never depart from his house,' that is, as long as he lived.^p—Again, the judgments of God for this sin are often transmitted to posterity. Thus Simeon and Levi's murder of the Shechemites was punished in the tribes that descended from them; who, according to the patriarch's prediction, were 'divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.'^q Saul's slaying the Gibeonites was punished in David's time by a famine which it occasioned.^r And the murders which the Jews had committed on the prophets in former ages, were punished in the destruction of their state and nation; when 'all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, came upon them.'^s—Further, the lives of murderers are often shortened, and they brought to the grave with blood. Thus Absalom perished by the just judgment of God, for the murder of his brother, as well as his other crimes. And in this the psalmist's observation holds true, that 'bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.'^t

4. This commandment may be broken otherwise than by the taking away of the life of our neighbour. A breach of it may be committed by a person in his heart, when he has not an opportunity to execute his malicious designs, or is afraid to execute them on account of the punishment from men which will follow. Thus the apostle says, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.'^u Of this we have an instance in wicked Ahab, who 'hated Micaiah, because he prophesied not good concerning him, but evil.'^x It is more than probable that his hatred would have broken forth into murder, could he have laid hold on the least shadow of pretence

k Judges xvi. 28—30.

l Dent. xix. 11, 12.

m 1 Kings ii. 28, 29.

n Numb. xxxv. 31.

o Gen. iv. 13—15. and 23, 24.

p 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10.

q Gen. xlix. 7.

r 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

s Matt. xxiii. 35.

t Psal. lv. 23.

u 1 John iii. 15.

x 1 Kings xxii. 9.

which might have put a colour on so vile an action. Jezebel also was guilty of this sin, who threatened to murder the prophet Elijah.^y The Jews, likewise, were guilty of it who were filled with malice against our Saviour; for which reason, they would have put him to death at that time, but they feared the people.^z—Moreover, while this sin reigns in wicked men, there are some instances of it even in good men. Thus David carried his resentment too far against Nabal, though a churlish and ungrateful man, when he resolved in his passion, not only to take away his life, which was an unjustifiable action, but to destroy the whole family, the innocent with the guilty.^a He was afterwards sensible of his sin in this passionate resolution; and blessed God for his preventing it, by Abigail's prudent management. There is another instance of sinful and unaccountable passion which cannot be excused from a degree of heart-murder, in Jonah; who was very angry because God was gracious, and spared Nineveh, on their repentance. In this fit of passion he desires that God would take away his life, justifies his anger, and, as it were, dares him to cut him off; which was as bad a frame as ever any good man was in. All this, too, took its rise from pride, lest some should think him a false prophet, who did not rightly distinguish between what God might do and would have done had they not repented, and what he determined to do, namely, to give them repentance, and so to spare them: I say, rather than be counted a false prophet, which it may be was a groundless surmise, he was angry with God for sparing it.^b

Here it will be inquired whether all anger is sinful, or a breach of this commandment? Now, as the apostle says, 'Be angry and sin not;'^c the words imply that there may be anger which is not sinful, but which, on the other hand, may rather be styled a zeal for God. Of this kind was that anger which our Saviour expressed against the Scribes and Pharisees, when he calls them 'serpents, a generation of vipers;'^d and when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, on which occasion it is said, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.'^e The apostle also reproved Elymas the sorcerer, who endeavoured to 'turn away the deputy from the faith,' with words that seemed full of anger, when he addressed himself to him in this manner, 'O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?'^f And Peter could not reprove that vile hypocrite, Simon Magus, when he offered to purchase the conferring of the Holy Ghost, without expressing some anger and resentment, as the cause required, when he said, 'Thy money perish with thee,'^g &c. Yet, that he might let him know that it was only zeal for God that provoked his anger, he gave him friendly advice to repent of his wickedness.^h

We may hence take occasion to inquire what the difference is between sinful anger or passion, and an holy zeal for God. Now, an holy zeal for God leads us rightly to distinguish between the person reproved, and his actions which give us occasion for reproof; so that we hate the sin, but not the person who commits it. Thus the psalmist says, 'I hate the work of them that turn aside.'ⁱ But sinful anger is principally directed against the person with whom we are offended.—Again, the honour of God is the only motive which excites holy zeal; but pride or evil surmise is generally the occasion of sinful anger. Thus Jehu's executing the vengeance of God in cutting off Ahab's wicked family, was right, as to the matter of it; yet it had a great mixture of ambition, pride, and private hatred of them, as those who he thought would stand in competition with him for the crown. Besides, he desired the applause and esteem of the people for the action, and therefore said to Jonadab, 'Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.'^k Hence, true zeal for God is attended with many other graces; and sinful anger with many sins.—Further, holy zeal for God inclines us to express anger against his enemies with sorrow and reluctance, being grieved for their sin, and at the same time desiring their reformation and salvation; but sinful anger meditates revenge, is restless till it has accomplished it,^l and is pleased with having opportunities of executing it.—Moreover, holy zeal sets aside or is not much concerned about injuries, as directed

v 1 Kings xix. 2.

z Mark xi. 18.

a 1 Sam. xxv. 21, 22.

b Jonah iv. 1—4.

c Eph. iv. 26.

d Matt. xxiii. 33.

e John ii. 15, 17.

f Acts xiii. 10.

g Acts viii. 20 21.

h Verse 22.

i Psal. ci. 3.

k 2 Kings x. 16.

l Prov. iv. 16.

against ourselves; but considers them as they reflect dishonour on the name of God, or are prejudicial to his interest in the world. Thus David said concerning Edom, 'Happy shall he be that dasheth thy little ones against the stones;'^m when, at the same time; he professed that it was for Jerusalem's sake that he desired the ruin of his enemies, and not his own; for he says, that he 'preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy.'ⁿ Sinful anger, however, designs or wishes evil to others, to promote our own interest and advantage.

We shall now consider the aggravations of sinful passion. It unfits a soul for holy duties. Accordingly, our Saviour advises his people, first to 'be reconciled to their brethren, and then come and offer their gift.'^o If we attempt to reprove sin, or persuade to duty, in a passion, it will tend to take away the force and hinder the success of the arguments we use. Sinful anger will occasion sorrow and shame, when reflected on in our most serious thoughts. It will expose us to Satan's temptations, and occasion a multitude of sins; and accordingly is called by the apostle, a 'giving place to the devil.'^p It magnifies the smallest injuries, and excites our resentments beyond their due bounds. We do not consider, as we ought to do, that the injuries done against us are very small when compared with the sins we commit, whereby we dishonour God. Further, sinful anger is opposite to a Christian temper, very much unlike that frame of spirit which our Saviour has recommended concerning loving our enemies,^q and is also contrary to his example, 'who when he was reviled, reviled not again.'^r Finally, as it is a stirring up of our own corruptions; so it tends to stir up the corruptions of others, and provoke them to sin, as one flame kindleth another, and so increaseth itself.^s

We shall further inquire how we are to deal with those whom we converse with, who are addicted to passion or anger. We are to exercise a calm, meek, and humble disposition, bearing reflections with patience, and replying to them with gentleness; especially when it is more immediately our own cause, and not the cause of God, which is concerned. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath.'^t 'He that is slow to wrath, is of great understanding.'^u Let us take heed, also, that we do nothing which tends to stir up the passions of any. If a superior is disposed to be angry, let us prudently withdraw from him. If it be an inferior, let us reprove him with faithfulness. If it be an equal, let us take away the edge of his anger, by meekness, love, and tenderness towards him, having compassion on his weakness. Let us bear injuries without revenging them, and 'overcome evil with good.'^x

m Psal. cxxxvii. 9.

q Matt. v. 44.

u Prov. xiv. 29.

n Verse 6.

r 1 Pet. ii. 23.

x Rom. xii. 19, 21.

o Matt. v. 23, 24.

s Prov. xxvii. 17.

p Eph. iv. 27.

t Chap. xv. 1.

[NOTE T. *The Judicial Law.—The Civil Punishment of Death.*—Are Christians—men who live under the New Testament dispensation, and recognise the doctrines and principles of the gospel—warranted, in any circumstances, to take away a man's life in punishment of his crimes? Most persons reply in the affirmative; yet they are exceedingly divided in opinion as to the circumstances or kinds of offence which warrant the infliction of death. All of them, however, who maintain any appearance of consistency in their reasonings, are of two classes,—those who regard the judicial law of Moses as a permanent model for every criminal code, and those who regard every peculiar part of the Mosaic legislation as having been abolished by Christ, and who place their opinions on the authority of the permanent statements of revelation. The former plead for the civil penalty of death in connexion with several crimes; while the latter plead for it in connexion chiefly, if not solely, with the crime of wilful murder.

Dr. Ridgeley is of the class who appeal to the enactments of the judicial law; and he even seems to maintain that these enactments, just in the state in which they were made for the Israelites, are still in force. He does not anywhere say, in as many words, that the judicial law is permanently and universally binding; but, in several instances, when expounding the decalogue, and especially when treating of the results of transgression in the present life, he quotes its provisions in the same manner, and with the same drift, as if they were precepts of the moral law. In the passage, for example, to which this Note is appended, and in another about the middle of the section in which it occurs, he refers to the enactments recorded in Deut. xvii. 8—10, and xix. 11, 12, on the subject of wilful murder, and exhibits them as permanent and universal authority for the civil magistrate inflicting on the perpetrator of that crime the punishment of death. Similar appeals he makes also on the subject of theft, and in other parts of his exposition of crime as affecting civil society. He probably—we may almost say, he certainly—would not have pronounced the entire judicial law to be of the same permanent and universal authority as the law of the ten commandments, had he looked the subject in the face, or proposed it to himself for investigation; yet, by the course he

pursues in the instances in which he appeals to it, he fairly assumes the principle of its entire authority, and its binding power upon the conscience. No reason can be assigned for appealing to its enactments on the subject of murderers and thieves, which will not fully and equally apply to its enactments on all subjects whatever. Hence, to interweave any portion of its provisions with the precepts of the moral law, or to represent them as bearing with the same force on the general conscience as the permanent revelations of the divine will, is just in principle to contend that the judicial law, in its own proper nature, was not designed to be peculiar to the Israelites, but is of universal and enduring obligation.

Now, it will not, I think, be difficult to show, both that the judicial law was framed exclusively for the Israelites, and that it was actually abolished by the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. Not a few statutes were, in their very nature, adapted or applicable only to the Israelites. A king was ineligible unless he was a descendant of Jacob, and was forbidden to multiply horses, or to cause his people to return to Egypt, Deut. xvii. 15, 16. Daughters who possessed any inheritance were prohibited from allying themselves in marriage to any man who was not of the same tribe as their father, Numb. xxxvi. 6—13. Certain cities were appointed within the Israelitish territory, as sanctuaries for the manslayer, and were placed under peculiar regulations for his protection, Deut. xix. 1—10. Every seventh year was made a year of release or of cancelling of all debt between Israelite and Israelite; strangers, however, or those who did not belong to the Israelitish commonwealth, being excluded from the benefits of the statute, Deut. xv. 1—3. A man who had two wives was enjoined, if he hated the mother of his eldest son, and loved the mother of a younger son, to preserve the rights of the son of the hated wife, and not to allow the son of the loved wife to usurp the place of the first-born, Deut. xxi. 15—17. Garments of various sorts of stuff, as of woollen and linen, were forbidden to be used, Deut. xxii. 11. When a woman taken captive in war, was thought by any man to be a desirable wife, she was enjoined to be carried to his house, to have her head shaven and her nails pared, to put off the raiment of her captivity, to bewail her father and her mother a full month, and then, if he should be pleased with her, to become permanently the man's wife, but if not, to be allowed to go whithersoever she chose, only not to be sold by him as a captive, Deut. xxi. 10—18. When the Israelites made war against a city, they were commanded, if an answer of peace were made to them, to make the people tributaries and bondsmen, and, if an answer of defiance were given, to besiege them, and afterwards smite all the males with the sword, and they were commanded also to carry on a war of extermination against the people inhabiting the territory assigned them for an inheritance,—to 'save alive nothing that breathed,' but 'utterly to destroy' the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, so that they might not learn from them the abominations of their idolatry, Deut. xx. 10—18. Such are some of the enactments of the judicial law,—similar, in their peculiar nature, and in the individuality of their adaptation, to others which might be quoted. Now, who will say that these enactments, and such as these, are of permanent and universal authority, or that they were made with reference to any other people than the Israelites, or to any other time than the duration of the Israelitish commonwealth? Yet they stand on the same basis, and possess the same economical character, and are part of the same code, as those laws respecting retaliation, and theft, and murder, which are quoted in support of the opinion, that the civil magistrate is warranted in inflicting the punishment of death. Either, therefore, that opinion, as based on the provisions of the judicial law, must be abandoned, or the enactments which I have quoted, and others of a similar complexion, so manifestly adapted to the peculiar circumstances, and polity, and geographical position of the Israelites, ought to be embodied in the civil and criminal codes of every land.

For proof that the judicial law was abolished by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, we do not need to go farther than to one of the two chapters whence Dr. Ridgeley draws his authority for the civil magistrate putting a murderer to death. The nineteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, after having stated the enactments respecting the cities of refuge, the inflicting of capital punishment upon wilful murderers, and the circumstances which should affect the validity of testimony, states, with particular reference to the injury done by a false witness, and with comprehensive allusion to all cases of murder, killing, and maiming, the doctrine of retaliation,—concluding with the words, 'Thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.' The same doctrine of retaliation, in nearly the same words, is, in two other passages, (Exod. xxi. 23; Lev. xxiv. 20,) taught as a general principle of the judicial law, and in immediate connexion with statements respecting the capital punishment of murder, and the appropriate penalty for various bodily injuries inflicted by men or by brutes. Now, by turning to our Lord's sermon on the mount, we find that he quoted the words in which this doctrine is stated, with the express design of announcing that the principle which they inculcate, and, in consequence, all the enactments with which it was connected, or the entire judicial code in which it was engrossed, had ceased to be authoritative, and were now superseded by the benign influence of principles which are of universal obligation. 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,' Matth. v. 38—42. His design, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the fifth chapter, seems to be to show that the law in all its parts, or all the revelation made of the divine will, has its fulfilment in connexion with his mediatorial work. 'Think not,' he said, 'that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.' He then intimates, by allusion to the righteousness on which the scribes and Pharisees depended, compared with the righteousness which qualifies for entering into that 'reign of heaven,' βασιλεια του ουρανου, which is 'within men,' and which is 'peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,' (Luke xvii. 21; Rom. xiv. 17; 1 Cor. iv. 20) that

the ceremonial law derived all its significance from its foreshadowing his priestly work ; so that it was necessarily abolished when he actually entered his priestly office. He next, by three examples, taken from the laws respecting murder, adultery, and divorce, shows that the moral law is to be understood so spiritually and comprehensively as to have cognizance of the thoughts and the affections ; so that it maintains its authority and accomplishes its design in our world, only in connexion with his mediatorial administration. He then, by examples on the subjects of making oaths, of retaliating injuries, and of treatment of enemies, exhibits the notions which the Jews entertained of the judicial law, and shows that our manner of giving testimony, and our conduct toward those who injure or hate us, are to be regulated, not as they supposed by principles connected with the policy of the Israelitish commonwealth, but by principles which are applicable to all the nations and individuals of the earth, and which recognise the whole human race as a family of brethren, every one of whom is bound to love and cherish his fellows ; so that the judicial law possesses significance, and fulfils its ulterior design, only when beheld in the retrospect as part of that peculiar system which prefigured the work of the Messiah for the benefit of the human family, and the distinguishing constitution of his spiritual, separated church. He thus teaches that the three departments of the law are all, in the highest sense, fulfilled in connexion with his administration,—that the moral law is understood only when its precepts are written on the heart and put in the mind, in establishing with men who believe on him the covenant which was ratified with his blood,—that the ceremonial law is understood only when it is seen pointing, in all its rites, to ‘the everlasting righteousness which he brought in,’ and the one offering which he made once for all for man’s transgression,—and that the judicial law is understood, not when interpreted, as among the Jews of his day, to be a literal rule of moral duty, but when regarded, in its institutions and in the polity with which it was connected, as teaching lessons quite as typical in their nature, or as peculiar and temporary in their character, as the economical and privileged condition of the people over whom it was established. Connected, too, as the particular enactment, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’ is, in all the three places in the Pentateuch where it occurs, with the statutes respecting the punishment of injuries and murder, our Lord’s language, ‘Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’ but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil,’ bears with direct force upon just that part of the judicial law which is quoted in defence of the civil magistrate’s inflicting capital punishment.

Either, in fact, the judicial must be viewed as having been abolished by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, or it must be regarded, not merely as a model for Christian legislators, but as part of the moral law, or as obligatory upon man simply as an accountable being. The whole of what was strictly or distinctively the law of Moses, originated after the exodus from Egypt, and was superseded at the advent of our Lord. Its institutes were a shadow of which the mediatorial dispensation is the substance ; and they are exhibited as in themselves mere form or letter, the spirit of which is to be found in the work and lessons of the Redeemer. ‘The law was given by Moses ; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.’ Whatever was set up by the Jewish legislator belonged to a state of things which was only introductory to the truth or reality set up by the Saviour. The law, as given by Moses, or that portion of divine revelation which was given in the organizing of the Jewish economy, was ‘the pedagogue of the church until Christ,’ *ὁ νομος παις αγωγος ἡμῶν γεγονεν εἰς Χριστόν* ; but ‘after faith came—after the substance was introduced which the shadow prefigured—the church was no longer under the pedagogue,—she was released from his power, and brought away from his authority, *ἐλευθεύσῃς δὲ τῆς πίστεως, οὐκέτι ὑπο παιδαγωγῶν εσμεν*. The law, as given by Moses, then, or what constituted distinctively and properly the Mosaic law, was all abolished at the advent of the Messiah. What is usually termed the moral law, however, or the law summed up in the ten commandments, formed no part of the abolished law ; nor, on the other hand, did it form a distinctive part of the law as given by Moses, but was in force from the beginning of the world, and continued to be of universal obligation, and was merely reduced to a written form and repromulgated with special solemnity after the exodus of the Israelites. Can the same thing be said respecting the judicial law ? Were its enactments known from the beginning ? were they obligatory upon all men ? were they merely repromulgated, and not originated, at the organization of the Israelitish commonwealth ? No man will say that they were, or will pretend that, as to at least the period of their origin and the design of their original adaptation, they were other than a portion of the distinctive law of Moses. What follows, then, but that, along with the enactments of the ceremonial law, they were divested of their authority by the glorious event which gave the whole Mosaic institute its significance—which ‘brought forth judgment unto truth ?’ (Comp. Isa. xlii. 1—3 ; Matt. xii. 14—21.) To argue, therefore, from any statement of the judicial law in support of opinions respecting a Christian country’s criminal code, or respecting the propriety of the civil magistrate inflicting the punishment of death, is just as inconclusive as to argue, from statements of the ceremonial law, in support of opinions respecting the proper manner, or the concomitant circumstances, of performing the duties of the Christian ministry.

We come now to glance at the opinion which vindicates the infliction of capital punishment on the principles of general revelation, apart from the authority of the judicial law. This opinion, with reference chiefly if not solely to the punishment of wilful murder, is based almost entirely on the text, ‘Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’ So concentratedly is evidence made to rest on this text, that, if it can be satisfactorily explained in a way not to support the permanent right of punishing wilful murder with death, any other texts which are appealed to will, almost certainly, be surrendered.

Before remarking on the text itself, I would ask whether, among the institutions of divine appointment which existed in the patriarchal ages, or in the times before the giving of the Mosaic law, there were any which—incorporated, in modified forms, in that law—were abolished at the introduction of the New Testament dispensation ? The offering of animals in sacrifice, the holding of the priestly office, the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath,—were not these institutions of

divine appointment, as ancient as the days of Adam, and yet abolished at the advent of the Messiah? Particular reasons, indeed, may be assigned for their abolition,—reasons perfectly clear and convincing; yet to what do these reasons amount, but that the institutions were specifically adapted to a state of things which was precurent to the light and spirituality and fulness of the Christian dispensation? Nor were institutions specifically adapted to that precurent state of things, such only as directly prefigured the work of the Messiah, but did not affect man's social conduct,—or such only as corresponded with the institutions of the ceremonial law, but did not correspond with those of the judicial. The law of the seventh-day Sabbath was not a ceremonial institution; and, as to some details of its observance and the penalties of its violation, it became as truly incorporated with the judicial law, as, in its basis, or in its embodying abstractly the doctrine of a sabbatic rest, it was an integral part of the moral. In connexion, too, with the very text, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' there is recorded a divine institution which would seem to class with neither the moral law nor the ceremonial: 'And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it,' Gen. ix. 5. This statute was afterwards repromulgated, in an enlarged or more detailed form, as an enactment of the judicial law: 'If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox shall push a man-servant or maid-servant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned,' Exod. xxi. 28—32. No one can doubt—especially if he take the trouble to examine the connection with a series of judicial enactments in which it occurs—that this enactment belonged to that distinctive or peculiar polity which perished with the Israelitish commonwealth. Nor can there be reasonable question that the prior enactment made to Noah was of the same temporary character. The very incorporation of it afterwards with the judicial law, is presumptive evidence that it was so. But, even apart from that fact, who will say that the penal infliction of death upon every brute which sheds human blood, is of permanent and universal obligation? There are, then, at least two institutions of a prefigurative character—the institution of priesthood and the institution of sacrifice—prior in date to the Mosaic law, and there are also at least two institutions not of a prefigurative character—the institution of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the institution of penally treating brutes which took away human life—likewise prior in date to the Mosaic law, which were superseded by the altered arrangements and the fuller revelations of the New Testament dispensation.

Now, since other institutions besides those of the judicial and the ceremonial law were abolished, a question is fairly raised whether one of these was not the institution of man's inflicting capital punishment upon a wilful murderer? The ante-Mosaic institutions which became abolished, were, in all the instances we have noticed, such as, after the exodus from Egypt, became incorporated with the Mosaic law. But the institution of capital punishment for murder was just as really and characteristically incorporated with that law, as the institutions of priesthood, sacrifice, and the seventh-day Sabbath. Does not this fact afford somewhat strong presumptive evidence that, like them, it partook of the distinctive or differential character of the Mosaic law, as precurent and introductory to another state of things, and, in consequence, shared in the temporariness of its duration? Let us remark, however, the connexion in which the institution was established:—'And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man,' Gen. ix. 5, 6. Who does not see that the enactment here has a twofold reference,—that, while the punishment of shedding human blood is the subject of it, that punishment is viewed in reference both to man and to beast? The same statute which enacts that the man guilty of shedding human blood should be put to death, enacts also that the beast guilty of shedding human blood should be put to death; and it clearly speaks in reference to both, in the summary statement, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'—To be consistent, therefore, every person who regards it as authority for the civil magistrate inflicting capital punishment on a murderer, ought to insist on his equally inflicting penal death on any ox or other beast which gores or kills a man. The Mosaic law, accordingly, when incorporating the one part of the statute, incorporated also the other; and so, in common consistency, ought every code which is framed on the assumption that the statute continues to be authoritative. Or if any party believe that the obligation has passed away to inflict penal death upon a brute which has shed human blood, he is bound, on his own principles, to believe also that the authority has passed away for inflicting capital punishment on a murderer.

But does the statute in question refer, after all, to the punishment of wilful murder? Does it not refer rather to the simple killing of a man without divine sanction, be the quality or aggravations of the action what they may? The statute has certainly one limitation; and expresses it with great distinctness: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, *by man shall his blood be shed.*' Here is explicit divine sanction for man putting the slayer of man to death, and consequent exemption of the former from the scope of the statute which he executes: the enactment, in its very terms, exempts the judicial slayer of one who slays. But is there any other limitation? Do not the terms employed distinctly include—with the exception of judicial executioners, or persons acting under divine sanction—all slayers of man whatever,—the slayer by inadvertence, the slayer through carelessness, and the slayer who intended to do no more than maim or wound, as well as the slayer from malice and murderous rage? No reason is found either in the language employed, or, so far as I am aware, in any known ante-Mosaic institution, for exempting any of the classes. But if, on the contrary, the statute be viewed in the light which is thrown upon it by its subsequent incorporation with the

Mosaic law, it will be seen to have distinctly included all, or, at the least, to have admitted limitations in reference to unintentional slaying which come far short of its being directed only against wilful murder. An Israelite who had undesignedly taken away human life, no matter by how mere an accident or with how much freeness soever from carelessness or culpable oversight, was not protected from the legal 'avenger of blood' unless he fled to a city of refuge, and obtained a public verdict declaring him entitled to protection within its walls; and even after he reached the city, and was pronounced by 'the congregation' free from the guilt of intentional murder, he could not, till the time of the high priest's death, pass to the outside of the city's gates, even for the shortest period or the shortest distance, without incurring the hazard of the legal loss of his life: see Numb. xxxv. 9—34, compared with Lev. xxiv. 17—22; Exod. xxi. 12—14; Deut. xix. 4—13. Thus any slayer of man, however different in character, and however removed in degree of guilt, from a wilful murderer, was obnoxious, even under the detailed and extended jurisprudence of the Israelitish commonwealth, to penal death, and was able to escape it only by instantly and carefully availing himself of a special means of protection. Would not the inference, then, appear clearly to follow, that the original or ante-Mosaic statute respecting the shedding of human blood, had reference, not to murder only, but to killing of every inferior degree of aggravation? This inference is greatly strengthened by what the Mosaic enactment says respecting the avenger of blood. The whole scope of the language as to the cities of refuge, and the unintentional manslayer, and the mutual and legal position of parties concerned in an act of shedding human blood, seems to assume that the avenger of blood, or near kinsman of the person slain, possessed a legal right, without waiting any public verdict, or instituting himself any inquiry into motives or degrees of guilt, to inflict upon the culprit, whether murderer, culpable homicide, or accidental manslayer, the penalty of death. Now, whence could this right have been derived, or on what authority could it have been pleaded, except the original statute, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed?' We are once more to remember, too, that this statute was directed, not only against every man, but also against every beast, who shed human blood. But surely no pretence will be made to distinguish degrees of guilt in the bite of dogs, the goring of oxen, or the kick of horses,—to distinguish between murder and manslaughter on the part of creatures which, if not destitute of what is or resembles reason, are altogether destitute at least of a moral sense? Yet if a distinction cannot be made in reference to brutes which shed human blood, it is difficult to see how a statute which applies alike to them and men, or which makes provision in the same language for both, can allow it to be made in reference to men who shed human blood. Just as we interpret the statute with regard to brutes which kill, so should we interpret it with regard to men who kill. It would, therefore—somewhat obviously, I think—appear to have been enacted against all shedding of human blood whatever, manslaughter as well as wilful murder; and as, if quoted to support the doctrine of permanent authority to inflict capital punishment, it would prove too much, it must be regarded as having been adapted simply to an elementary state of society,—as having probably had connexion with the peculiar circumstances of the patriarchal dispensation,—or more probably still, as having concurred with the minor enactment against eating the blood of animals, to exhibit the value of 'blood in which is the life,' and inculcate indirectly the great doctrine of sacrifice,—and as having, through the medium of subsequent incorporation with the Mosaic law, passed down the current of temporary but significant institutions which were precurrent and introductory to the full revelations of the Christian dispensation.

I cannot, without writing matter which might fill a pamphlet or a small volume, attempt to do justice to the question of capital punishment; and—forbearing either to notice subordinate arguments in favour of the practice, or to state and illustrate any of some reasons which might be urged against it—must content myself with having examined the chief defence of it in the case of wilful murderers, as founded on the provisions of the Mosaic law, and on the enactment communicated to Noah. Yet before concluding this note, I may add one or two general remarks.

If the principal arguments in defence of punishing murder with death under the Christian dispensation, have been proved to be inconclusive, or built on mistaken premises, the subordinate arguments which are sometimes made to follow in their wake may fairly be expected to admit of easy refutation. If, too, the grand authority usually pleaded for capital punishment in the case of murder, have been proved peculiar to an age whose characteristic or distinctive institutions were superseded by the full revelation attending and following the Messiah's advent, it will hardly be pleaded in favour of capital punishment for other crimes. If, further, the chief of those defences of capital punishment for murder which are founded on the divine word, have been shown to rest on mistaken views or mistaken interpretation, other defences of the practice which are founded on mere expediency will scarcely be allowed to possess soundness or influence. An overthrow, or even a serious shaking, of the strongest arguments founded on appeal to the Bible for punishing wilful murder with death, will be felt, by every philanthropist and every cautious jurist, sufficient reason for his solemnly pausing before he commit himself to the advocacy or the continued sanction of capital punishment in any shape, or for any offence whatever.

One principle clearly and very frequently stated in the New Testament is, 'Avenge not yourselves: vengeance is mine—I will recompense, saith the Lord.' Under the old economy, men were employed, both upon ordinary and upon extraordinary occasions, as ministers of the divine anger, and were furnished with special oracles for direction in their work; but, under the new economy, they are no longer employed in the same way, or at least are not employed by receiving a commission or command, and can become instruments of vengeance only by that controlling administration which makes even the wrath of man to praise God, and brings good out of evil. *Duty*, or obligation to obey, or a command of heaven, now, in no case, calls upon man to take vengeance or to retaliate, but, in every case, binds him to show mercy, to practise kindness, to exercise placability, to cherish love to all persons, even to private and inveterate enemies. Nor does the association or incorporation of men into communities, churches, or states, affect, in any degree, the character of the law under which they are placed as individuals. Man, be he situated how he may, is not removed from under

the law which is established over him as an accountable being, and as a subject of the New Testament dispensation. A civil magistrate, or an administrator of equity in civil affairs, or a speculator in jurisprudence, either will entirely shut his eyes to the light of revelation, and act essentially in the same way as a practical infidel does in private life; or he will acknowledge the principles, and bow to the authority, and yield to the guidance of revelation, and act in essentially the same way, or at least in the same spirit, as a sincere Christian does in the domestic circle. Benevolence, or an enlightened regard to the best interests or the only true welfare of those toward whom he acts, will oblige him, indeed, to practise as really physical severity upon offenders as amenity towards the unoffending; but, for just the same reason, it also obliges a private Christian in the domestic circle as really to lift the rod against a naughty child or to inflict privation upon an unfaithful servant, as to distribute smiles and encouragements among the obedient and the gentle. Transition from a private to a magisterial or civil sphere, does not and cannot alter the nature of a man's moral responsibilities: it can, at the utmost, do no more than multiply or enlarge his occasions for exercising the benevolence, which is in all circumstances unqualifiedly incumbent upon him, in the way of privation and restraint upon its object, rather than in the way of encouragement and sympathy. The civil magistrate is warranted or empowered to inflict punishment, therefore, not on the principle of retaliation or of taking vengeance, but on the principle of benevolence or of doing good. His work is not to award retribution for actions, but to maintain equity among men, and promote the benefit of all. Punishment, in his hands, is chiefly if not solely a means of preventing and eradicating evil. Even mere jurists, accordingly, or men who discuss the question of civil legislation on principles entirely apart from those of revelation, are somewhat unanimous in the opinion that the magistrate's office is simply to prevent crime and reclaim the criminal; and, when any of them ascribe to him a power of inflicting capital punishment, they, for the most part, suppose it to exist or to be legitimate, only in instances in which either the criminal is so hardened as to be past reclamation, or the crime is of such a nature as to render his death a necessary or most effective means of deterring others from committing it. Some condemn capital punishment in every case whatever; and others approve it only when, in their opinion, both ends of punishment—the preventing of crime and the reclaiming of the criminal—cannot be attained, and when, for the sake of securing one of them, the other must be sacrificed. But even the latter class of jurists have, in many instances, been recently brought to doubt, whether one end of punishment ought ever to give way wholly to the other, or whether, even in cases of robbery and murder, the prevention of crime and the public benefit may not be secured in perfect consistency with the preservation of the criminal's life; and whenever they have arrived at conviction or even at hesitancy on this point, they have lifted their voices against the expediency of capital punishment. Not a few inductions, too, have been made from facts as to the absence, the infrequency, or the diminution of capital punishment in Bavaria, in the United States of America, in Britain, and in other countries, on which conclusions have been built, respecting influence upon the prevention of crime, the public good, and the reclaiming of offenders, altogether unfavourable to the practice of capital punishment. Now, if a movement so decided in favour of reclaiming great criminals rather than putting them to death, have been made on grounds of mere expediency or of mere calculation of beneficial results, it ought surely to be very easily completed on grounds of appeal to the sublime and benevolent principles of the gospel. To drive away a miserable wretch from that state of being in which alone he has access to the means of grace,—to put a sudden termination to all his opportunities of being made wise to salvation, of seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near,—to stretch out, as far as a mortal can do, a vindictive hand against his soul, and smite him in his interests for eternity;—this is truly an act of frightful responsibility for man to perform, and would seem to be warrantable by nothing short of a most obvious divine sanction. If the enactment communicated to Noah be of the nature of moral law, or possess permanent and universal authority, it is no doubt a sufficient sanction; but if it be of the character which I have endeavoured to show, no sanction, so far as I am aware, can be pleaded,—no divine command, no commission from heaven, no authority whatever, except such appeals to expediency, or such conclusions from obscure and circuitous reason, as will hardly hinder a man who knows any thing of the benign and beneficent spirit of the gospel from standing aghast at the idea of touching the life even of a murderer.—ED.]

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXXXVII. *Which is the seventh commandment ?*

ANSWER. The seventh commandment is, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

QUESTION CXXXVIII. *What are the duties required in the seventh commandment ?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the seventh commandment, are chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes, and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency; conjugal love, and cohabitation, diligent labour in our callings, shunning all occasions of uncleanness, resisting temptations thereunto.

QUESTION CXXXIX. *What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts, all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent, or light behaviour; immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages, allowing, tolerating, keeping of stewes, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life; undue delay of marriage, having more wives or husbands than one, at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company, lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage-plays, and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness either in ourselves or others.

The Duties Required in the Seventh Commandment.

THIS commandment respects, more especially, the government of the affections, and the keeping of our minds and bodies in such an holy frame, that nothing impure, immodest, or contrary to the strictest chastity, may defile us, or be a reproach to us, or insinuate itself into our conversation with one another. In order to this, we are to set a strict watch over our thoughts and actions, and avoid every thing which may be an occasion of this sin, and use those proper methods which may prevent all temptations to it. Hence, we ought to associate ourselves with none but those whose conversation is chaste, and such as becomes Christians; and to abhor all words and actions which are not so much as to be named among persons professing godliness. As for those who cannot, without inconveniency, govern their affections, but are sometimes tempted to any thing which is inconsistent with that purity of heart and life which all ought religiously to maintain, it is their duty to enter into a married state; which is an ordinance that God has appointed to prevent the breach of this commandment.

The Sins forbidden in the Seventh Commandment.

We are thus led to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment.

1. Some of these sins are not only contrary to nature, but inconsistent with the least pretensions to religion; and such as were abhorred by the very heathen themselves, and, by the law of God, punished with death. When this punishment has not been inflicted, God has, by his immediate hand, testified his vengeance against those guilty of the sin, by raining down fire and brimstone from heaven, as he did upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.^y These sins are called in this Answer, incest, sodomy, and unnatural lusts. To this we may add, offering violence to others, without their consent; and thereby forcing them to do what they could not even think of but with abhorrence. This is called rape; and by the law of God, the person guilty of it was punished with death.^z

2. There are other sins whereby this commandment is violated, which, though more common, are, nevertheless, such as are attended with a very great degree of guilt and impurity. These are either such as are committed by those who are unmarried, namely, fornication, or by those who are married, as adultery. The latter, by the law of God, was punished with death;^a as containing several aggra-

^y Levit. xviii. 22—25; Chap. xx. 13, 15, 16; Rom. i. 24, 26, 27, 28; Gen. xix. 24.

^z Deut. xxii. 25.

^a Levit. xx. 10.

vating circumstances. For hereby the marriage contract is violated, and the mutual affection which is the end of that relation broken; and therefore the greatest injury is done to the innocent, as well as ruin brought on the guilty. Both these sins, however, agree in this, that they proceed from a corrupt heart, as our Saviour says,^b and argue the person who is guilty of them alienated from the life of God.

Another sin forbidden in this commandment, is polygamy, or having more husbands or wives than one, at the same time; together with that which often accompanies it, namely, concubinage. It is beyond dispute that many good men have been guilty of this sin, as appears by what is recorded in scripture concerning Abraham, Jacob, David, &c. Nor do we find that they are expressly reprov'd for it; which has given occasion to some modern writers to think that polygamy was not unlawful in those ages, but was afterwards rendered so by being prohibited under the gospel dispensation.^c This opinion, indeed, cuts the knot of a very considerable difficulty; but it involves another equally great; for, according to this opinion, polygamy does not appear to be contrary to the law of nature. I would rather choose, therefore, to take another method to solve the case, namely, that many bad actions of good men are recorded in scripture, but not approved of, nor proposed for our imitation. Of this kind I must conclude the polygamy and concubinage of several holy men, mentioned in scripture, to have been. That it may appear that this practice was not justifiable, let it be observed that some sin or other is often expressly mentioned as the occasion of it. Thus Abraham's taking Hagar was occasioned by Sarah's unbelief, because the promise of her having a son was not immediately fulfilled.^d Jacob's taking Rachel to wife after Leah was occasioned by Laban's unjust dealing with him, and his own discontent arising from it; and his going in unto Bilhah was occasioned by Rachel's unreasonable desire of children; and his taking Zilpah, by Leah's ambitious desire of having pre-eminence over Rachel, by the number of her children.^e Again, the practice was generally attended with the breach of that peace which is so desirable a blessing in families; so that many disorders followed. Thus we read of an irreconcilable quarrel between Sarah and Hagar; and of Ishmael's hatred of Isaac, which the apostle calls 'persecution.'^f We may notice, too, the contentions which there were in the family of Jacob and others; the envy expressed by the children of one wife against those of another; and the opposition which one wife often expressed to another, as that of Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, to Hannah, the other. We must conclude, therefore, that Isaac's example is rather to be followed in this matter, who had but one wife; and whom he loved better than many of the patriarchs did theirs, whose love was divided among several.

It is objected that, if polygamy was a sin against the light of nature, it is strange that it should have been committed by good men, and that they should have lived and died without repenting of it, or being in the least reprov'd for it, as we do not find that they were in scripture. We reply, that it was, indeed, a sin which they might have known to be so, had they duly considered it in all its circumstances and consequences. But this they did not; and therefore it was not so great a sin in them as it would be in us, who have clearer discoveries of the heinous nature of it. If we suppose that they repented of all sin agreeably to the light they had, they might be saved. This, though unrepented of, was no bar to their salvation, supposing they knew it not to be a sin; and God's not having explicitly reprov'd them for it, argues only his forbearance, but not his approbation of it.

It is farther objected that God says, by Nathan, to David, 'I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom;'^g and it is hence inferred that that which God gives, it is not unlawful for man to receive. But the meaning of that scripture in general is, that God made David king; and that then, according to the custom of the eastern kings, David took possession of what belonged to his predecessor, and consequently of his wives. God might thus be said to give David Saul's wives providentially, in giving him the kingdom; so that they were his property, that he might

^b Matt. xv. 19.^e Chap. xxix. and xxx.^c Vid. Grot. de jur. bell. et pacis, lib. ii. cap. v. §. 9.^f Gal. iv. 29.^d Gen. xvi. 1, 2.^g 2 Sam. xii. 8.

take them for his own, according to custom, if he was inclined so to do. This the kings of Judah generally did ; though it does not follow that God approved of their doing so. So tyrants may be said to be raised up by God's providence and permission ; yet he does not approve of their tyranny.

All that we shall add under this head, is, that polygamy is contrary to the first institution of marriage. God created but one woman as an help-meet for Adam ; though, if ever there were any pretence for the necessity of one man's having more wives, it must have been in that instance, in which it seemed necessary for the increase of the world. But he rather chose that mankind should be propagated by slower advances, than to give the least dispensation or indulgence to polygamy, as being contrary to the law of nature.^h The prophet takes notice of God's 'making but one ;'ⁱ though he had 'the residue of the spirit,' and therefore could have given Adam more wives than one. The reason assigned was that 'he might seek a godly seed,' that is, that the children who should be born of many wives, might not be the result of the ungodly practice of their father, as it would be were this contrary to the law of nature ; which we suppose it to be. This I rather understand by 'a godly seed,' and not that the character of 'godly' refers to the children ; for these could not be said to be godly, or ungodly, as the consequence of their parents having one or more wives.—There is one scripture more which I cannot wholly pass over, which, to me, seems a plain prohibition of polygamy, 'Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time.'^k This respects either incest or polygamy ; one of which must be meant by 'taking a wife to her sister.' Now, it cannot be a prohibition of incest, because it is said, 'Thou shalt not do it in her life-time ;' which plainly intimates, that it might be done after her death. But it is certainly contrary to the law of God and nature, for a person to take his wife's sister after her decease, as well as in her life-time. Hence, the meaning is, 'Thou shalt not take another wife to her whom thou hast married ; by which means they will become sisters.' Moreover, there is another reason assigned, namely, the envy, jealousy, and vexation which would follow ; as the taking of another wife would be a means of vexing or making the first wife uneasy. Hence, the sense, as is observed in the marginal reading, is, 'Thou shalt not take one wife to another,' or, 'Thou shalt not have more wives than one.' This is a plain prohibition of polygamy. But whether some holy men, in following ages, understood the meaning of this law, may be questioned ; and therefore they were not sensible of the guilt they contracted by violating it. Thus we have considered some of the sins forbidden in this commandment. To notice every particular instance of the breach of it, would exceed our intended brevity on the subject we are treating of.

The Aggravations of the Sins against the Seventh Commandment.

We shall proceed to consider the aggravations, more especially, of the sins of fornication and adultery. These may also, with just reason, be applied to all other unnatural lusts which have been before considered as a breach of this commandment. Now, these sins are opposite to sanctification, even as darkness is to light, hell to heaven. Accordingly, the apostle opposes fornication and uncleanness, to sanctification.^l—Again, these sins are inconsistent with that relation we pretend to stand in to Christ, as members of his body ; inasmuch as we join ourselves in a confederacy with his profligate enemies.^m We may add, that they are a dishonour to and a defilement of our own bodies, which ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should be consecrated to him.—Further, they bring guilt and ruin on two persons at once, as well as a blot and stain on the families of each. They also give a wound to religion, when committed by those who make any profession of it ; as they 'give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.'ⁿ—Further, they bring with them many other sins ; as they tend to vitiate the affections, deprave the mind, defile the conscience, and provoke God to give persons up to spirit-

^h Gen. ii. 22—24.

^l 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7

ⁱ Mal. ii. 15.

^m 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16.

^k Levit. xviii. 18.

ⁿ Prov. vi. 33 ; 2 Sam. xii. 14.

ual judgments, which will end in their running into all excess of riot. We may add, that many sad consequences will follow the commission of these sins; as they tend to blast and ruin men's substance in the world,^o debase and stupify the soul, and deprive it of wisdom,^p wound the conscience, and expose the person who is guilty of them, to the utmost hazard of perishing for ever.^q And if God is pleased to give him repentance, it will be attended with great bitterness.^r

The Occasions of the Sins against the Seventh Commandment.

We are now to consider the occasions of these sins, to be avoided by those who would not break this commandment. One of these is intemperance, or excess in eating or drinking. The former is a making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; the latter confounds and buries the little reason a person was master of, and makes him an easy prey to temptation. This was Lot's case; he kept his integrity in Sodom; yet being made drunk by his daughters in Zoar, he committed the abominable sin of incest with them.^s—Another occasion of these sins is idleness, consisting either in the neglect of business, or indulging too much sleep. Thus David first gave way to sloth, and then was tempted to uncleanness. It is observed that 'at the time when kings go forth to battle,'^t and when he ought to have been with his army in the field, he tarried at Jerusalem, and slept in the middle of the day; for 'in the evening-tide he arose from off his bed.' Now, the heinous sin he was guilty of, which was the greatest blemish in his life, followed this indulgence.—Another occasion of these sins is pride in apparel or other ornaments, beyond the bounds of modesty, or for other ends than what God, when he clothed man at first, intended; when our attire is inconsistent with our circumstances in the world, or the character of persons professing godliness. This God reproves the Jews for, when grown very degenerate, and near to ruin.^u Jezebel, when Jehu came in quest of her, 'painted her face, and tired her head;' but her doing so did not prevent his executing God's righteous judgments upon her. All these things are mentioned as the sins for which Sodom was infamous; and gave occasion to those other abominations, which provoked God to destroy them.^x—We may add, as another occasion of these sins, the keeping of evil company. Thus it is said of the lewd woman, 'She hath cast down many wounded.'^y Bad company will hasten our own ruin; especially if we associate with lewd persons out of choice; for our doing so is a sign that our hearts are exceedingly depraved and alienated from God. If, however, providence cast our lot amongst bad company, we may escape that guilt and defilement which would otherwise follow, provided we bear our testimony against their sin, and are grieved for it, as Lot was for the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, among whom he dwelt.^z Moreover, those places where there are mixed dancings, masquerades, stage-plays, &c., which tend to corrupt the principles and practices, and seldom fail of defiling the consciences and manners of those who attend on them, are nurseries of vice, and give occasion to the sins in question, and many others.^a

As for the remedies against unchastity, these are, exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations to it;^b avoiding all conversation with those men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it; but, more especially, retaining a constant sense of God's all-seeing eye, his infinite purity and vindictive justice, which will induce us to say as Joseph did, in a similar case, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'^c

^o Job xxxi. 9, 11, 12.
^p Chap. vii. 13, 19, 26, 27.

^u Isa. iii. 16, et seq.

^a Prov. vi. 27. compared with 32.

^q Hosea iv. 11; Prov. vi. 32; chap. vii. 22.

^r Eccl. vii. 26.

^x Ezek. xvi. 49.

^s Gen. xix. 31.

^y Prov. vii. 27.

^b Chap. viii. 9.

^q Prov. vi. 33;

^t 2 Sam. xi. 1, 2.

^z 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

^c Gen. xxxix. 9.

THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXL. *Which is the eighth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal."

QUESTION CXLI. *What are the duties required in the eighth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts, and commerce between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality, avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretiship, or other like engagements; and an endeavour, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

THIS commandment supposes that God has given to every one a certain portion of the good things of this world; which he may lay claim to as his own, and which no other has a right to. The general scope and design of it, is to put us upon using endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate. As to ourselves, it respects the government of our affections, and the setting of due bounds to our desires of worldly things, that they may not exceed what the good providence of God has allotted for us, in order to our comfortable passage through the world. Thus Agar prays, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.'^d As to our endeavours to gain the world, it requires a due care and diligence to get and keep a competency, that we may not, through our own default, expose ourselves to those straits and necessities which are the consequence of sloth and negligence.^e God may, indeed, give estates to some without any pains, or care to get them;^f yet, even in this case, sloth is a sin which brings with it many hurtful lusts, which render riches a snare and a hinderance to their spiritual welfare. Hence, they who are in prosperous circumstances in the world, ought not to lay aside all care and industry to improve what they have, to the glory of God. But, on the other hand, they who are in a low condition ought to use a provident care and diligence, in order to their having a comfortable subsistence. Accordingly, this commandment obliges us to use all lawful endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate.

The Promotion of our Own Well-being.

1. In promoting our own wealth and estate, we are first to practise frugality in our expenses, and to avoid profuseness. We are neither to give away our substance to unfit objects, namely, those who are in better circumstances than ourselves, who ought to be givers rather than receivers;^g nor are we to make large contributions to support a bad cause, or to consume our substance on our lusts. Likewise, when we are unwarily profuse in those expenses which would be lawful did they not exceed our circumstances or income in the world, we disregard the future condition of our families, and take a method to reduce ourselves and them to poverty.^h Or, if our circumstances will admit of large expenses; yet, to abound in expenses, merely out of ostentation, and, at the same time, to withhold our liberality from the poor, is inconsistent with frugality.

2. We ought also to be diligent and industrious in our calling. In order to this, we are wisely to make choice of a calling in which we may glorify God, and expect his blessing for the promoting of our wealth and temporal prosperity. Hence, that business is to be chosen which we are most capable of managing, and which has the fewest temptations attending it; especially if it does not burden the conscience by unlawful oaths, or by prostituting solemn ordinances, not designed by Christ as

d Prov. xxx. 8.
g Prov. xxii. 16.

e Chap. xxiii. 21; xxiv. 30 31.
h 1 Tim. v. 8.

f Deut. vi. 10 11.

a qualification for it. Moreover, we are not to choose those callings in which gain is obtained by oppression or extortion, and which cannot be managed without danger of sinning; which will bring the blast of providence on all our undertakings. Hence, we are earnestly to desire God's direction in the weighty concern of choosing a profession; as well as to depend on him for success in it.^l When we have made choice of a lawful calling, we are to manage it in a way in which we may expect the blessing of God for the promoting of our wealth and temporal prosperity. Let us pursue and manage it with right and warrantable ends, namely, the glory of God, and, in subordination to this, our providing for ourselves and families, that we may be in a capacity to do good to others, and serve the interest of Christ in our day and generation. Let us take heed that our secular employments do not rob God of that time which ought to be devoted to his worship; and that our hearts be not so alienated from him that, while we are labouring for the world, we should live without God in it. Let us take heed that we do not launch out too far or run too great hazards in trade, resolving that we will be suddenly rich or poor; for our acting thus may tend to the ruin of our own families, as well as others.^k Let us bear disappointments in our callings, with patience and submission to the will of God, without murmuring or repining at his wise and sovereign dispensations of providence.

The Promotion of our Neighbour's Well-being.

This commandment obliges us to promote the wealth and outward estate of our neighbour. This we are to do by exercising strict justice in our contracts and dealings with all men; and by relieving the wants and necessities of those who stand in need of our charity.

1. We are first to exercise justice in our dealings. Here we must take heed that we do not exact upon, or take unreasonable profit of, those whom we deal with, taking advantage of the ignorance of some and the necessities of others.^l Nor must we use any methods to supplant and ruin others, against the laws of trade, by selling goods at a cheaper rate than any one can afford them, thereby doing damage to ourselves, with a design to ruin those who are less able to bear such a loss. Again, those goods which we know to be faulty, are not, by false arts, or deceitful words, to be sold, as though they were not so.^m On the other hand, the buyer is not to take advantage of the ignorance of the seller, as sometimes happens; nor is he to pretend that an article is worth less than he really thinks it to be.ⁿ Further, nothing is to be diminished in weight or measure from what was bought; nor are worse goods to be delivered than what were purchased,^o nor 'the balances to be falsified by deceit.'^p

2. We are to promote the good of our poor distressed neighbour, in works of charity; and we are to do this, not only by an inward sympathy, or bowels of compassion towards him, but according to our ability, by relieving him. As an inducement to this duty, we ought to consider that outward good things are talents given us, with the view that we may, by means of them, be in a capacity to help others, as well as be freed from needing help ourselves. And when we thus employ our substance, we may be said to improve what we have received from God, as those who are accountable to him for it, and testify our gratitude to him for outward blessings. Moreover, Christ takes acts of kindness, when proceeding from an unfeigned love to him, as done to himself.^q We may add, that there are many special motives, taken from the objects of our charity, namely, the pressing necessities of some, the excelling holiness of others. In some instances, too, by an act of charity, whereby we relieve one, we do good to many; and when we relieve those who suffer for the sake of the gospel, there may be a tendency to promote the interest of Christ in general.

Let us consider here of whom works of charity are required. If this matter be

i Eccles. ix. 11; Deut. viii. 18.

m Amos viii. 6.

p Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 15.

k 1 Tim. vi. 9.

n Prov. xx. 14.

q Matt. xxv. 40; Prov. xix. 17.

l Jer. iii. 15.

o Amos viii. 5.

duly weighed, we shall find that scarcely any are exempted from this duty, except it be those of whom it may be said that there are none poorer than themselves, or those who have no more than what is absolutely necessary to support their families, or those who are labouring hard to spare out of their necessary expenses what will but just serve to pay their debts, or those who are reduced to such straits as to depend upon others, so that they can call nothing they have their own. This duty is incumbent on the rich, out of their abundance; and on those who are in middle circumstances in the world, who have a sufficiency to lay out in superfluous expenses. Even the poor ought to give a small testimony of their gratitude to God, by sparing a little, if they can, out of what they get in the world, for those who are poorer than themselves. If this be but a few mites, it may be an acceptable sacrifice to God;^r and if persons have nothing beforehand in the world, they ought to work for this end, as well as to maintain themselves and families.^s

Let us next consider who are to be reckoned objects of our charity. These are not the rich, who stand in no need of it, and from whom we may expect a sufficient requital;^t nor those who are strong and healthy, but yet make a trade of begging, because it is an idle and sometimes a profitable way of living.^u But those are to be relieved who are not able to work; especially if they were not reduced to poverty by their own sloth and negligence, but by the providence of God not succeeding their endeavours; and if while they were able, they were ready to all works of charity themselves.^x We may add, that those are to be relieved who are related to us, either in the bonds of nature, or in a spiritual sense.^y

We are now to inquire what part or proportion of our substance we are to apply to charitable uses. Here, as the circumstances of persons in the world are so various, as well as their necessary occasions for extraordinary expenses, it is impossible to give a general rule, to be observed by all. It must be premised, however, that our present contributions ought not to preclude all thoughts about laying up for ourselves or families, for time to come. Moreover, whatever proportion we give of our gain in the world, some abatements may reasonably be made for losses in trade; especially if what we give was not determined, or laid aside, for that use before the loss happened. As to the proportion of substance to be given, it ought to be left to the impartial determination of every one; who is to act in this matter under a conviction that he is accountable to God. The apostle lays down one general rule, 'Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.'^z But though we pretend not to determine the exact proportion which ought to be given, namely, whether a tenth part of our profits, or more, or less; yet it is highly reasonable that every one should contribute as much in works of charity as he lays out in mere superfluities, or, at least, spare a part out of his superfluous expenses for charitable uses. Moreover, there are some occasions which may call for large contributions. Thus the churches in Macedonia are commended, not only for their 'giving according to,' but 'beyond their power.'^a Three things may be here considered.

First, the extreme necessities of those whom we are bound to take care of, and sometimes the distressed circumstances of the church of God, in general, require larger contributions than ordinary. Such circumstances were the occasion of the command mentioned by our Saviour, of selling all and giving to the poor, which was put in practice in the infancy of the church, or the first planting of the gospel at Jerusalem.—Secondly, extraordinary instances of the kindness of God, in prospering us either in worldly or spiritual concerns, beyond our expectation, call for extraordinary expressions of gratitude to God in laying by for the poor.^b—Thirdly, when we have committed great sins, or are under very humbling providences, whether personal or national, being exposed to or fearing the judgments of God, which seem to be approaching; we are called to deep humiliation, and, together with this, proportionable acts of charity.

We are now to consider with what frame of spirit works of charity are to be per-

r Luke xxi. 2, 4.

u 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

z 2 Cor. ix. 7.

s Eph. iv. 28.

x 1 Tim. v. 10.

a 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 3.

t Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.

y Gal. vi. 10.

b 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

formed. Now, they are to be performed prudently, as our own circumstances will permit, and the necessity of the object requires; also seasonably, not putting this duty off till another time, when the necessities of those whom we are bound to relieve call for present assistance.^c We are also to perform this duty secretly, not desiring to be seen of men, or commended by them for it;^d and cheerfully;^e also with tenderness and compassion to those whose necessities call for relief, considering how soon God can reduce us to the same extremity which they are exposed to who are the objects of our charity. It ought to be done likewise with thankfulness to God, who has made us givers rather than receivers;^f and as a testimony of our love to Christ, especially when we contribute to the necessities of his members.^g

THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXLII. *What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen, fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust enclosures, and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price, unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbour what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming, and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

Self-robbery.

THIS commandment forbids, in general, all kinds of theft. This may include what is very seldom called by the name, namely, the robbing of ourselves and families. We may be said to do this, by neglecting our worldly calling; by imprudently managing it; and by lending larger sums of money than our circumstances will well bear, to those who are never likely to pay it again, or, which is in effect the same, by being surety for such. Moreover, we rob ourselves and families, by being profuse and excessive in our expenses; by consuming what we have, while pursuing our pleasures more than business; or by gaming, whereby we run the risk of losing part of our substance, and reducing ourselves or others to poverty. On the other hand, we rob ourselves and families, when, out of a design to lay up a great deal for the time to come, we deprive ourselves and them of the common necessities of life; which is, in effect, to starve for the present, in order to prevent our starving for the future. But, passing this by, we shall consider this commandment more especially, as it respects our defrauding others.

Theft.

We break this commandment by taking away any part of our neighbour's wealth or worldly substance. This is generally known by the name of theft; and is punishable by human laws, and that, with the greatest severity, in proportion to its aggravations. Moreover, they who are guilty of it, are, without repentance, excluded from the kingdom of God.^h Let it be considered, however, that every kind of theft does not deserve an equal degree of punishment from men; for sometimes the owner of what was stolen receives but little damage. Yet in this case, some punishment short of death ought to be inflicted, to reform the wicked person, and deter him from going on in the breach of this commandment, from less to greater sins. By the law of God, a simple theft was punished with restitution of twice, and in some cases four times, as much as the damage which was sustained amounted

^c Prov. iii. 28.
^f Acts x. 35.

^d Matt. vi. 3, 4.
^g Matt. x. 42.

^e 2 Cor. ix. 7.
^p 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

to.ⁱ In other cases, however, the theft was punished with death, when it had in it some circumstances which aggravated it in an uncommon degree. If an house, which ought to be reckoned a man's castle, be broken open, and that in the night-time, when he is in no condition to defend himself or his worldly substance, in this case the law is not unjust which punishes the thief with death; and this is supposed in that law which says that he who kills one who 'breaks up' his neighbour's house by night, shall have 'no blood shed for him.'^k But, in other instances, confinement and hard labour, may be as effectual a way to put a stop to this sin; and is rather to be chosen than punishment with death. Thus concerning this commandment, as broken by theft.

Breach of Trust.

This commandment is farther broken, by unfaithfulness, or breach of trust; whether the trust be devolved on us by nature, as that of parents towards their children; or by contract, as that of servants, who are intrusted with the goods and secrets of their masters; or that which is founded in the desire and request of those who constitute persons executors to their wills, or guardians to orphans under age, provided they accept of this trust. If any of these violate their trust, by embezzling or squandering away the substance of others, or defrauding them to enrich themselves, their conduct is not only theft, but perfidiousness, and highly provoking to God, and deserves a more severe punishment from men than is usually inflicted.

Non-payment of Debt.

This commandment may be said to be broken, by borrowing, and not paying just debts; as the psalmist says, 'The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.'^l Yet there are some cases in which a man is not guilty though he borrows and does not pay. If, for example, when he borrowed, there was a probability of his being able to repay; or if he discovered his circumstances fully to him of whom he borrowed, to whom it would appear whether there was any likelihood of his paying him or not; or if he gave full conviction, when he borrowed, that he was able to pay, but the providence of God, without his own default, has rendered him unable; in this case mercy is to be shown him, and he is not to be reckoned a breaker of this commandment. In various other cases, however, a person is guilty of the breach of it, in borrowing, and not paying debts. If the borrower pretends that his circumstances are better than they are, and so makes the lender believe that, in a limited time, he shall be able to repay him; when, in his own conscience, he apprehends that there is no probability that he shall be able to do so, he is guilty of breaking this commandment. Again, when a person was in such circumstances at the time of his borrowing, that, by industry in his calling, he might be able to pay the creditor, but, by neglect of business, or embezzling his substance, he renders himself unable to pay, he is chargeable with the breach of this commandment. Further, if pity be shown, by compounding for a part, instead of the whole debt, in case of present insolvency; though the debtor, in form of law, is discharged with the creditor's consent, yet the law of God and nature obliges him to pay the whole debt, if providence makes him able hereafter; else he can hardly be excused from the breach of this commandment.

This leads us to inquire what judgment we may pass on the 'Israelites borrowing of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold,' which we read of in Exod. xi. 35, whether in this matter they were guilty of the breach of this commandment. Now, the word^m which we render 'borrowed,' might as well be rendered

ⁱ Exod. xxii. 1, 4, 7.

^k Verse 2.

^l Psal. xxxvii. 21.

^m The Hebrew word *שָׁאָה*, which is here used, signifies not only 'commodavit,' or 'usuī dedit,' or 'accepit,' but 'petiit,' or 'postulavit,' in the last of which senses it is to be understood, in Deut. x. 12, 'What doth the Lord require or demand of thee?' &c. And in Judges v. 25, where the same word is used, it is said that 'Sisera asked water of Jael,' not as one who was borrowing it of her, but as a gratuity for former kindness which he had shown to her.

'asked,' or 'demanded.' We must hence suppose that the Egyptians were so desirous that the Israelites should be gone, apprehending that if they continued, they were all dead men, that they might have of them whatever they demanded as necessary for their expedition; while, if they came back, as they supposed they should, they would be obliged to return them. If this be the sense of the Hebrew word, there is no difficulty in the text, nor any appearance of the breach of this commandment. But as the sense of the word is indeterminate, signifying to 'demand,' as well as to 'borrow,' God's order imports the former; though the Egyptians might understand it in the latter, as denoting a borrowing with a design to restore. The Israelites, then, acted in this matter by God's command, who has a right to take away the goods which one possesses, if he pleases, and give them to another; for he takes away nothing but his own. Now, that they had his warrant for borrowing or demanding these things of the Egyptians, appears from the second verse. Moreover, the reason why God ordered them to do this, if we look beyond his absolute sovereignty, was that the Israelites deserved what they received as wages for their hard service. Besides, the contribution might be reckoned a reward of the good offices which Joseph had done to Egypt, which had been long since forgotten. As to the Israelites, it is probable that they expected nothing else but to return again, and restore to the owners what they had borrowed of them, after they had sacrificed to God in the wilderness; at least, they were wholly passive, and disposed to follow the divine conduct by the hand of Moses. And when they were in the wilderness, they could not restore what they had borrowed, since the owners, as is more than probable, were drowned in the Red sea; their revenge and covetousness, as well as Pharaoh's orders, having prompted them to follow the Israelites. Or if some of the owners might have been heard of, as yet surviving, their right to what was borrowed of them was forfeited, by reason of the hostile pursuit of Pharaoh and his hosts, which put them into a state of war.

This may lead us farther to inquire what judgment we may pass on the many ravages and plunders which are generally made by armies engaged in war; whether they may be reckoned a breach of this commandment. Now, it is beyond dispute that, if the war be unjust, as all the blood which is shed is murder, or a breach of the sixth commandment; so all the damage which is done by burning of houses, or taking away the goods of those against whom it is carried on, is a breach of this commandment. But if we suppose that the war is just, that the damage is done only to those who are immediately concerned in it, and that it is an expedient to procure peace; it is unquestionably lawful, and no breach of this commandment. Thus when the Israelites were commanded to destroy the inhabitants of the land of Canaan as criminals, they were admitted to seize on the spoil of other nations, who were more remote from them,ⁿ when conquered by them. As for those plunders and robberies which are committed on private persons, who are not concerned in the war, any otherwise than as subjects of the government against which it is undertaken, especially if the losses they sustained have no direct tendency to procure peace, these can hardly be justified from being a breach of this commandment.

Oppression.

This commandment is broken also by oppression; whereby the rich may be said to rob and even swallow up the poor.^o Now there are various ways by which persons may be said to oppress others. They may do so by engrossing those goods which are necessary for food or clothing, in order to enhance the price of them; so that the poor are brought into great extremities. Again, persons are guilty of oppression when they enrich themselves out of the unmerciful labour exacted of their servants, whom they will hardly suffer to live, or eat the just reward of their service. Such a master was Laban to Jacob.^p Landlords also are guilty of it when they turn their tenants out of their houses or farms, when they find that they get a comfortable subsistence by their industry, taking occasion thence to raise their

ⁿ Deut. xx. 14, 15.

^o Psal. xiv. 4; x. 9; Micah iii. 2, 3.

^p Gen. xxxi. 41, 42.

rent in proportion to the success God gives them. Finally, the rich are guilty of oppression when they make the poor suffer by long delays to pay them their debts, that they may gain advantage by the improvement of that money which they ought to have paid them.

Litigiousness.

A person may be said to break this commandment, by engaging in unjust and vexatious lawsuits. It is to be owned, however, that going to law is not, at all times, unjust. For it is sometimes a relief against oppression; and it is agreeable to the law of nature for every one to defend his just rights. On this account, God appointed judges to determine causes, to whom the people were to have recourse, that they might 'show them the sentence of judgment.'^q Yet we must conclude lawsuits to be in some cases oppressive. They are so when the rich make use of the law to prevent or prolong the payment of their debts, or to take away the rights of the poor, who, as they suppose, will rather suffer injuries than attempt to defend themselves. Lawsuits are oppressive also when bribes are either given or taken, with a design to pervert justice.^r We may add, that the person who pleads an unrighteous cause, concealing the known truth, perverting the sense of the law, or alleging that for law or fact which he knows not to be so; and the judge who passes sentence against his conscience, respecting the person of the rich, and brow-beating the poor; are confederates in oppression, while their methods of proceeding are, beyond dispute, a breach of this commandment.

It is objected that our Saviour forbids going to law even to recover our just rights, when he says, 'If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.'^s We reply, that some things may be omitted for prudential reasons, which would not otherwise be unlawful to be done. Our Saviour does not forbid using our endeavours, in a legal way, to recover our right in all cases; but he forbids it more especially at that time, when his followers could hardly expect to meet with justice. It may be also that they were oppressed by fines or distress, laid on them for their embracing Christianity; and in this case he advises them patiently to bear injuries, when they could hardly expect relief from their unjust judges.

Usury.

This commandment is broken by extortion or oppressive usury. Thus it is said of the righteous man, 'He putteth not out his money to usury.'^t The word signifies 'biting usury';^u which is, beyond dispute, unlawful. We have elsewhere considered in what cases the Israelites might take usury, and when not.^x On the whole, it is certainly unlawful to exact more than the legal rate or worth of the loan of money; or to exact any usury of the poor,—especially for that which was borrowed to supply them with the necessities of life.

Restitution.

Having considered in what instances this commandment is broken, we proceed to show what a person ought to do who has been guilty of the breach of it, in any of the forementioned instances, in order to his making restitution for the injuries he has done to his neighbour. The making of restitution ought always to attend the exercise of sincere repentance in those who have been guilty of this sin; of which we have an instance in Zaccheus.^y The neglect of it will be like a worm at the root of ill-gotten estates, and will be little better than a continual theft.

It is objected, however, that it may be a prejudice to our reputation, by making our crime public, which before was only known to ourselves. But what we do in this matter, is not really a reproach, but an honour; and it is hardly to be sup-

q Deut. xvii. 8, 9. r 1 Sam. viii. 2. s Matt. v. 40. t Psal. xv. 5. u מִשְׁכָּס, from שָׁסַק.
'memordit.' x See Sect. 'The Judicial Law,' under Quest. xeviii. y Luke xix. 8.

posed that he to whom we perform so just and unexpected a duty, will be so barbarous as to divulge or improve the transaction against us to our disadvantage. Besides, there are private ways of making restitution, whereby the injured party may receive what is sent to him, and not know from whom it comes ; or, good turns may be done to him in a way of compensation for the damages he has received, and he not know that they are done with this design ; and, by this means, we disburden our consciences, perform a necessary duty, and, at the same time, prevent the supposed ill consequences which might follow.

It is farther objected that sometimes the making of restitution is impracticable ; as when the person injured is dead, and we know of none who has a right to receive his property. Sometimes also we may have been guilty of so many instances of fraud and oppression, and to such a great number of persons, that it is next to impossible. But when it is impossible for us to make restitution to those whom we have injured, or when we know of none who survive them who have a right to receive it, the best expedient, I apprehend, we can make use of, is to give it to the poor ; for as it is not in justice our own, we do, as it were, hereby give it to the Lord, who is the original proprietor of all things.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXLIII. *Which is the ninth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The ninth commandment is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

QUESTION CXLIV. *What are the duties required in the ninth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbour as well as our own ; appearing, and standing for, and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever ; a charitable esteem of our neighbours ; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name, sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities ; freely acknowledging their gifts and graces ; defending their innocency ; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them ; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers ; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth, keeping of lawful promises, studying and practising of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of a good report.

QUESTION CXLV. *What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment ?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment, are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbours as well as our own, especially in public judicature, giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth, passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil, rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked ; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others ; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice ; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring, misconstruing intentions, words, and actions, flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others, denying the gifts and graces of God, aggravating smaller faults, hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins when called to a free confession, unnecessary discovering of infirmities, raising false rumours, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence ; evil suspicion, envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavouring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy, scornful contempt, fond admiration, breach of lawful promises, neglecting such things as are of good report, and practising or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering, what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

The Duties Required in the Ninth Commandment.

In explaining this commandment we are to consider first what the duties are which it requires.

1. We must endeavour to promote truth in all we say or do ; and that as to what concerns either ourselves or others. As to what concerns ourselves, we are to guard against every thing which savours of deceit or hypocrisy ; and, in our whole

conversation, endeavour to be what we pretend to be, or to speak nothing but what we know or believe to be true upon good evidence,—the contrary to which is lying. —As to what concerns others, we must not neglect to reprove sin in them, how much soever our worldly interest may lie at stake. Thus Azariah reprov'd Uzziah,^z and Elijah, Ahab; though the attempt could not but be hazardous in each of them. Moreover, we must endeavour to undeceive others who are mistaken; especially if the error they are liable to be of such a nature that it endangers the loss of their salvation. We are also to vindicate those who are reproached by others, to the utmost of our power, according as the cause will admit.

2. This commandment obliges us to endeavour to promote our own and our neighbour's good name. Our own good name consists, not in our having the applause of the world, but in our deserving its just esteem, and in our being loved and valued for our usefulness to mankind in general. Now, this esteem is not to be gained by commending ourselves, or doing any thing but what we engage in with a good conscience and the fear of God. In order to this, we must take heed that we do not contract an intimacy with those whose conversation is a reproach to the gospel.^a We must also render good for evil, and not give occasion to those who watch for our halting, to insult us as to any thing besides unavoidable infirmities.^b This degree of honour in the world we ought first to endeavour to gain, especially so far as it is necessary to our honouring God, and being useful to others. Then we must be careful to maintain our good name; forasmuch as the loss of it, especially in those who have made a public profession of religion, will reflect dishonour on the ways of God, whence his enemies will take occasion to blaspheme.^c But if all our endeavours to maintain our character and reputation are to no purpose, and we are followed with reproach as well as hatred and malice, from an unjust and censorious world; let us look to it that if we 'suffer reproach,' it be 'wrongfully, not as evil-doers, but for keeping a good conscience in the sight of God;' which may be a means to make those who reproach us 'ashamed.'^d Moreover, let us count the reproach of Christ, that is, reproach for his sake, a glory.^e Again, let us always value their good opinion most who are Christ's best friends, and expect little else but ill-treatment from his enemies; and then we shall be less disappointed when we are exposed to it. And let us not, out of fear of reproach, decline any thing which is our duty, in which the honour of God and the welfare of his people is concerned; but in this case, let us leave our good name in Christ's hand, whose providence is concerned for and takes care of the honour, as well as the wealth and outward state, of his people.

We are also to endeavour to maintain the good name of others. In order to this, we must render to them those marks of respect and honour which their character and advancement in gifts or grace call for; yet without being guilty of servile flattery or dissimulation. If they are in danger of doing any thing which may forfeit their good name, we are carefully to reprove them, having a due regard to any good thing which is in them towards the Lord their God. And in maintaining their good name, we are to conceal their faults, when we may do so without betraying the interest of Christ; and especially when the honour of God and their good are better promoted than by divulging them.^f

The maintaining of the good name of others is not, however, without some exceptions. We are not to conceal the crimes committed by others. If private admonition, for scandalous sins committed, prove ineffectual, and the discovering of them to others may make the offender ashamed, and promote his reformation; we are not to conceal his crimes, though the divulging of them may lessen the esteem which others have of him; since it is better for him to be ashamed before men, than perish in his hypocrisy.^g Again, if the crime committed be such that shame, and the loss of his good name, be a just punishment due to it, we are not to conceal it, thereby to stop the course of justice. Further, when the honour and good name of an innocent person cannot be maintained, unless by divulging the crimes of the guilty, he who has forfeited his good name ought to lose it, rather than he who has not.

z 2 Chron. xxvi. 18.

c 2 Sam. xii. 14.

f 1 Pet. iv. 8; Prov. xvii. 9.

a Prov. xxviii. 7.

d 1 Pet. iii. 16.

b 1 Pet. ii. 12; Phil. iv. 8.

e Chap. iv. 14; Acts v. 41.

g Matt. xviii. 16, 17.

We shall close this head by considering what reason we have to endeavour to maintain the good name of others. To take away our neighbour's good name, is to take away one of the most valuable privileges he is possessed of. The loss of it may be inexpressibly detrimental to him; and sometimes may affect his secular interest; so that in taking it away, we may be said to take away his wealth and outward estate, and prevent his usefulness in that station of life in which providence has fixed him. Accordingly, we are to express a due concern for the honour and reputation of others as well as for our own. Thus concerning the duties required in this commandment.

The Sins Forbidden in the Ninth Commandment.

We proceed to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These are summed up in the general expression, 'bearing false witness;' and they may respect either ourselves or others. A person may be said to bear false witness against himself, in thinking either too highly or too meanly of himself. In the former respect, we value ourselves, or our supposed attainments, either in gifts or graces, too much. As regards these, we are, for the most part, mistaken, and pass a wrong judgment on them, and are ready to say, with the church at Laodicea, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not' that we are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'^h On the one hand, some mistake the common gifts of the Spirit for grace, and conclude themselves to be something when they are nothing. But on the other hand, many conclude that they have no grace, and rank themselves among hypocrites and unbelievers, when their hearts are right with God, and they have had large experience of the powerful influences of his Spirit, but are not sensible of it. Thus Christ says to the church in Smyrna, 'I know thy poverty; but thou art rich.'ⁱ In these respects persons may be said to bear false witness against themselves.

But that which is principally forbidden in this commandment, is a person's bearing false witness against his neighbour. He does this either when he endeavours to deceive him, or when he endeavours to do him prejudice as to his reputation in the world. The one is called lying; the other backbiting or slandering. As to the former, our saying that which is contrary to what we know to be truth, with a design to deceive, is what we call telling a lie; and our doing that which is contrary to truth, may be deemed a practical lie; both of which are very great sins.

1. A person is guilty of lying, when he says that which is contrary to truth, with a design to deceive. This the old prophet at Bethel did to the prophet of the Lord; on which occasion it is said that he 'lied unto him.'^k Now, lying is something more than saying what is contrary to truth; for a person may do this and be guiltless. He may do so, for example, when there is some circumstance which discovers him to speak ironically; so that he does not appear to have a design to deceive those to whom he addresses his discourse. Thus when the prophet Micaiah said to Ahab, 'Go and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it,' namely, Ramoth-Gilead, 'into the hands of the king;'^l it is plain that he spake the language of the false prophets, and that Ahab understood him in this sense, or suspected that he spake ironically. For he says, 'How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true?'^m The prophet then tells him, without irony, though in a metaphorical way which Ahab easily understood, 'I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd. And the Lord said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace.'ⁿ This was an intimation, that, if he went up to Ramoth-Gilead, he should fall in battle. Hence, Ahab says to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?'^o It thus appears that the prophet did not deceive him; though the mode of speaking which he at first made use of, without considering it as irony, seemed to intimate as much.—Again, a per-

^h Rev. iii. 17.
^m 1 Kings xxii. 16.

ⁱ Chap. ii. 9.
ⁿ Verse 17.

^k 1 Kings xiii. 18.
^o Veres 18.

^l Chap. xxii. 15.

son may say that which is contrary to truth, being imposed on himself, without any design to deceive another. This cannot, indeed, according to the description before given, be properly called a lie. Yet he may sin by asserting too positively that which he thinks to be true from probable circumstances or uncertain information; especially if what he reports carries in it matter of scandal or censure. This was the case of Job's friends. They did not tell a lie against their own consciences; yet they were too peremptory in charging him with hypocrisy, without sufficient ground. Hence, God imputes folly to them, in that 'they had not spoken of him the thing which was right.'^p

Here it may be inquired whether a person who designs not to deceive, nor speaks contrary to the dictates of his own conscience, but who promises to do a thing, and does it not, is guilty of lying. Now, if a person promises to do a thing, which at the same time he really designs, and afterwards uses all the endeavours he could to fulfil his promise, but something unforeseen happens in the course of providence to prevent the execution of it, he cannot, properly speaking, be said to be guilty of a lie; though we ought not to promise any thing but upon the supposition that God enables us to perform it. Again, if a person intends to do a thing, and, accordingly, promises to do it, but afterwards sees some justifiable reason to alter his mind, he is not guilty of a lie; since all creatures are supposed to be mutable. Thus the angels told Lot, that they would 'abide in the street all night;' but afterwards, upon his entreaty, they 'went into the house with him.'^q Our Saviour also, when he walked with his disciples to Emmaus, 'made as though he would have gone farther; but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; and he went in to tarry with them.'^r But, notwithstanding this, if a person promises to do any thing which is of advantage to another, as the paying of a just debt, &c., it is not a sufficient excuse to clear him from the guilt of sin, if he pretends that he has altered his mind, supposing that it is in his power to fulfil his promise. This conduct is, indeed, a breach of the eighth commandment; and, in some respects, it will appear to him to whom he made the promise to be a violation of it.

That we may more particularly speak concerning the sin of lying, which multitudes are chargeable with, let it be observed, that there are three sorts of lies. First, when we speak that which is contrary to truth, and the dictates of our own conscience, with a design to cover a fault or excuse ourselves or others. This we generally call an officious lie.^s Secondly, when a person speaks that which is contrary to the known truth, in a jesting way; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing to impose on others. This they are guilty of, who invent false news, or tell stories for truth which they know to be false. This is to lie in a jesting, ludicrous manner.^t Thirdly, there is a pernicious lie, namely, when a person raises and spreads a false report with a design to do injury to another. This is a complicated crime, and the worst sort of lying.^u

Here there are two or three inquiries which it may not be improper to take notice of. One of these is, whether the midwives were guilty of an officious lie, when they told Pharaoh that 'the Hebrew women were delivered of their children, ere they came in unto them;'^h concerning whom it is said, in the following verse, that 'God dealt well with the midwives' for this report, which carries in it the appearance of a lie. Now, they seem not to have been guilty of a lie; for it is not improbable, that God, in mercy to the Hebrew women and their children, might give them uncommon strength; so that they might be delivered without the midwives' assistance. Or if this was not the case with all the Hebrew women, but only with some or many of them, the midwives' report is only a concealing of part of the truth, while they related, in other respects, that which was matter of fact. Now, a person is not guilty of telling a lie, who does not discover all that he knows. There is a vast difference between concealing a part of the truth, and telling that which is directly false. No one is obliged to tell all he knows to one who, he is sure, will make a bad use of it. This seems to have been the case of the midwives. Hence,

p Job xlii. 8.

q Gen. xix. 2, 3.

r Luke xxiv. 28, 29.

s 'Mendacium officiosum.'

t This is called 'mendacium jocosum.'

u This is called 'mendacium perniciosum.'

x Exod. i. 19.

their action was justifiable, and commended by God ; they being not guilty, properly speaking, of an officious lie.

Another inquiry is, what judgment we must pass concerning the actions of Rahab, the harlot, who invented an officious lie, to save the spies from those who pursued them. It is said, 'she took the two men and hid them ;'^y and, at the same time, pretended to those who were sent to inquire of her concerning them, that 'she wist not whence they were,' but that they 'went out of the city about the time of the shutting of the gate, though whither they went she knew not.' The main difficulty we have to solve is what the apostle says in apparent commendation of this action, 'By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.'^z Now, the apostle says, indeed, that she 'received the spies with peace,' that is, she protected them, and did not betray them into the hand of their enemies. But this act of faith does not relate directly to the lie which she invented to conceal them ; for, doubtless, she would have been more clear from the guilt of sin, had she refused to give the messengers any answer relating to them, and so had given them leave to search for them, and left the event to providence. This, indeed, was a very difficult duty ; for it might have endangered her life ; and her choosing to secure them and herself, by inventing this lie, brought with it a degree of guilt, and was an evidence of the weakness of her faith. But, on the other hand, that faith which the apostle commends in her, respects some other circumstances attending this action. Accordingly, it is not said that by faith she made the report to the messengers concerning the spies, but, that 'by faith she received them with peace.' Now, there are several things in which her faith was very remarkable. She was confident that 'the Lord would give them the land' which they were contending for.^a She makes a just inference relating to this matter, from the wonders which God had wrought for them in the Red sea.^b She makes a noble confession, that 'the Lord their God is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.'^c She put herself under the protection of the Israelites, and desired to take her lot with them ; and she did this at the hazard of her life, though she might have saved it, and probably have received a reward, had she betrayed them. This I conceive to be a better vindication of Rahab's conduct than that which is alleged by some, who suppose that, by entering into confederacy with the spies, she put herself into a state of war with her own countrymen, and so was not obliged to speak truth to the men of Jericho. Such an interpretation is followed by many ill consequences, and gives too much countenance to persons deceiving others, under pretence of being in a state of war with them. As to what the Papists say in her vindication, that a good design will justify a bad action ; this is not true in fact, and therefore not to be applied to her case.

It might be farther inquired what judgment we ought to pass on the method which Jacob took to obtain the blessing, when he told his father, 'I am Esau, thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me ;'^d whether he was guilty of a lie in this conduct. Now, there is not the least doubt that he was. Some, indeed, endeavour to excuse him, by alleging that he had, before this, bought the birth-right of Esau, and that on this account he calls himself Isaac's first-born. But this will not clear him from the guilt of a lie ; for what he said would still have been an equivocation, and spoken with a design to deceive. Others own it to have been a lie ; but extenuate it, from the consideration of God's having designed the blessing for him before he was born.^e But these do not at all mend the matter. For, though God may permit or overrule the sinful actions of men, to bring about his own purpose ; yet his doing so does not, in the least, extenuate their sin. We may farther observe, in reference to this action and the consequence of it, that good men are sometimes liable to sinful infirmities, as Jacob was ; who was followed with many sore rebukes of providence, which made the remaining part of his life very uneasy. He lived in exile twenty years, with Laban, an hard master, and an unjust and unnatural father-in-law. Again, great distress befell him in his return ; occasioned first by Laban's pursuit of him, and then by the tidings which he re-

y Josh. ii. 4, 5.
c Josh. ii. 11.

z Heb. xi. 31.
d Gen. xxvii. 19.

a Josh. ii. 9.
e Chap. xxv. 23.

b Verse 10.

ceived of his brother Esau coming out to meet him, 'with four hundred men.' As Esau was prompted by revenge, which he had long harboured in his breast, Jacob expected nothing less than the destruction of himself and his whole family. Further, he did not obtain deliverance from the hand of God without 'great wrestling ;'^f and this attended with 'weeping,' as well as 'making supplication.'^g And, though he prevailed, and so obtained the blessing, and therewith forgiveness of his sin ; yet God so ordered it, that he should carry the mark of his success upon him as long as he lived, by touching the hollow of his thigh, which occasioned an incurable lameness.

Another inquiry is, whether the prophet Elijah did not tell a lie to the Syrian host, who were before Dothan, in quest of him, when he said, 'This is not the way, neither is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man you seek. But he led them to Samaria ?'^h But if what he says to them be duly considered, it will appear not to be a lie ; for he told them nothing but what proved true, according to the import of his words. He does not say, I am not the man ye seek, which would have been a lie ; nor does he say, the man is not here ; but he tells them, 'I will lead you to the place where ye shall find him,' or have him discovered and presented before you. Again, when he says, 'This is not the way, neither is this the city ;' he does not say, this is not the way to Dothan, neither is this the city so called ; for then they would have been able to have convicted him of a lie, for they knew that they were at Dothan before they were struck with blindness. But the plain meaning of his words is, "This is not your way to find him, since the men of this city will not deliver him to you ; but I will lead you to the place where you shall see him ;" and 'so he led them to Samaria,' where their eyes were opened, and they saw him. What he said, therefore, was not a lie. And the reason of his management was, that the king of Israel and the Syrian host might be convinced that they were poor creatures in God's hand, and that he could easily turn their counsels into foolishness, and cause their attempts to miscarry with shame as well as disappointment.

It may be farther inquired, whether the apostle Paul was guilty of a lie, when, being charged with 'reviling God's high priest,' he said, 'I wist not that he was the high priest ?'ⁱ How was it possible that he should entertain any doubt concerning his being the high priest ; a matter which none who were present could, in the least, question ? Now, we may suppose that the apostle, when he says, 'I wist not that he was the high priest,' intends nothing, but "I do not own him to be the high priest, as you call him ; for he is not an high priest of God's appointing or approving. Had he been so, he would have acted in a manner more becoming that character ; and then I should have had no occasion to have told him, 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.' For to have said so would have been 'reviling him ;' since I know that scripture very well which says, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'"^j He thus intimates that, though he was an high priest of man's making, he was not one of God's approving ; and that accordingly he was to be treated with contempt, instead of that regard which was formerly paid to the high priests, when they were better men, and acted more agreeably to their character. No one who deserves to be called God's high priest, would have ordered a prisoner who came to be tried for his life, instead of making his defence, to be smitten on the mouth. But, suppose we render the words agreeably to our translation, 'I did not understand that he was the high priest,' Paul may still be vindicated from the charge of telling a lie. The assembly was a confused one, and not a regular court of judicature, in which the judge or chief magistrate is known to all, by the place in which he sits, or the part he acts in trying causes. Again, the high priest, in courts of judicature, was not known by any robe or distinct habit which he wore, as judges now are ; for he never wore any but his common garments, which were the same that other people wore, except when he ministered in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple. Hence, the apostle could not know him by any distinct garment which he wore. Further, through the corruption of the times, the high priest was changed almost every year, according to the

^f Gen. xxxii. 24—26.

^g Hosea xii. 4.

^h 2 Kings vi. 19.

ⁱ Acts xxiii. 4, 5.

will of the chief governor, who advanced his own friends to that dignity, and oftentimes sold it for money. It is therefore probable that Ananias had not been long high priest; and Paul was now a stranger at Jerusalem, and so might not know that he was high priest. Thus, if we take the words in the sense in which they are commonly understood, the apostle may be sufficiently vindicated from the charge of telling a lie.

It may be farther inquired, what judgment we may pass concerning David's pretence, when he came to Ahimelech, that 'the king commanded him a business, which no one was to know any thing of,' and that he had 'appointed his servants to such and such a place;'^k and also concerning his 'feigning himself mad,' before the king of Gath,^l which dissimulation can be reckoned no other than a practical lie. In both these instances he must be allowed to have sinned; and therefore is not proposed as a pattern to us. All that can be inferred is, that there is a great deal of the corruption of nature remaining in the best of God's people. What he told Ahimelech was certainly a lie; and all that he expected to gain by it, was only a supply of his present necessities; the consequence of which was the poor man's losing his life, together with all the priests, except Abiathar, by Saul's inhumanity. David seems to have been truly sensible of this sin; as appears from Psal. xxxiv., which, as is intimated in its title, was penned on this occasion. Here he warns others against the same sin, 'Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile;'^m and he seems to relate his own experience when he says, 'The Lord is high unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.'ⁿ As to his behaviour before the king of Gath, which was a visible lie discovered in his actions, it can by no means be excused from being a breach of this commandment. It is, indeed, alleged by some to extenuate his fault, that he was afraid that his having killed Goliath, would induce Achish to take away his life; as appears from what is said in verses 11, 12. Yet it may be considered as an aggravation of his sin, that his fear seems to have been altogether groundless. For why should he suppose that the king of Gath would break through all the laws of arms and honour, since Goliath had been killed in a fair duel, the challenge having first been given by himself? Why should David fear that he would kill him for that, any more than for other hostilities committed in war? Besides, it is plain from what Achish says, 'Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? should this fellow come into mine house?'^o that the king of Gath was so far from designing to revenge Goliath's death on him, that he intended to employ him in his service, and take him into his house. But David's mean action made him despised by all; for it seems probable, by Achish's saying, 'Have ye brought this fellow to play the madman?' that he perceived it to be a feigned and not a real distraction. And this was overruled by the providence of God, to let the Philistines know that the greatest hero is but a low-spirited man, if his God be not with him. On the other hand, if we suppose that there had been just ground for David's fear, the method taken to secure himself involved a distrust of providence. Providence would, doubtless, have delivered him without his dissembling, or thus demeaning himself, or using such an indirect method to effect his deliverance. Thus concerning the violation of this commandment, by speaking that which is contrary to truth.

II. This commandment is farther broken, by doing that which is contrary to truth. This is what we call hypocrisy. It may be considered, first, as a reigning sin, inconsistent with a state of grace; in which respect an hypocrite is opposed to a true believer. Hypocrites make a fair show of religion; but it is with a design to be seen of men.^p They are sometimes, indeed, represented as 'seeking' God, and 'inquiring early' or with a kind of earnestness after him, when under his afflicting hand; but their doing so is deemed no other than a 'flattering him with their mouth, and a lying unto him with their tongues;' inasmuch as 'their heart is not right with him.'^q Elsewhere, too, they are said to 'love the praise of men more than the praise of God.'^r—Again, hypocrisy may be considered as that which be-

^k 1 Sam. xxi. 2.

^o 1 Sam. xxi. 15.

^l Verse 13.

^p Matt. vi. 5.

^m Psal. xxxiv. 13.

^q Psal. lxxviii. 34—37.

ⁿ Verse 18.

^r John xii. 43.

lievers are sometimes chargeable with, which is an argument that they are sanctified but in part; but this rather respects some particular actions, and not the tenor of their conduct. Thus the apostle Paul charges Peter with dissimulation;^s though the latter was far from deserving the character of an hypocrite as to his general conduct. And our Saviour cautions his disciples against hypocrisy, as that which they were in danger of being overtaken with;^t though he does not charge them with it as a reigning sin, as he did the scribes and Pharisees, whom he compares to 'painted sepulchres';^u nor were they such as the apostle speaks of, whom he calls 'double-minded men, who are unstable in all their ways.'^x

That hypocrisy which we may call a reigning sin, may be known by a person's accommodating himself to all those whom he converses with, how much soever his doing so may tend to the dishonour of Christ and the gospel. Here we may take occasion to inquire whether the apostle Paul was, in any respects, chargeable with this sin, when he said, 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.'^y For understanding this scripture, and vindicating the apostle from the charge of hypocrisy, let it be considered that the compliance he here speaks of, was with a design, not to gain the applause of the world, but to serve the interest of Christ. Nor did he connive at, or give countenance to, that false worship or those sinful practices of any, which were contrary to the faith or purity of the gospel. Hence, when he says, 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew,' he does not mean that he gave them the least ground to conclude that it was an indifferent matter, whether they adhered to, or laid aside, the observance of the ceremonial law. For he expressly tells some of the church at Galatia who were disposed to judaize, that this was contrary to 'the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, a being again entangled with the yoke of bondage;' that 'if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing;' and, that they were 'fallen from grace,' that is, turned aside from the faith of the gospel.^z In this sense, therefore, he did not become as a Jew, to the Jews. Nor did he so far comply with the Gentiles as to give them ground to conclude, that the superstition and idolatry which they were guilty of, was an harmless thing, and might still be practised by them. Hence, the amount of his compliance with the Jews or Gentiles, was nothing else but this, whatever he found praiseworthy in them, he commended; and if, in any instances, they were addicted to their former rites or modes of worship, he endeavoured to draw them off from them, not by a severe and rigid behaviour censuring them, refusing to converse with them, or reproaching them for their weakness, but by the use of kind and gentle methods, designing rather to inform than discourage them; while, at the same time, he was far from approving or giving countenance to any thing which was sinful in them or unbecoming the gospel.

From what has been said concerning an hypocrite's being one who performs religious duties with a design to be seen of men, as our Saviour says of the Pharisees that 'they love to stand praying in the synagogues, or in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men,'^a we may inquire what may be said in vindication of the prophet Daniel from the charge of hypocrisy, concerning whom it is said that, when Darius had signed a decree prohibiting any one from asking a petition of any god or man, save of the king, he should be cast into the den of lions, 'he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'^b Now, he acted thus, not to gain the esteem or applause of men, a motive which they are charged with who are guilty of hypocrisy; but he acted in contempt of the vile decree of the Persian monarch. Again, he acted as he did at the peril of his life; and showed that he had rather be cast

^s Gal. ii. 11—13.

^y 1 Cor. ix. 20—22.

^t Luke xii. 1.

^z Gal. v. 1—4.

^u Matt. xxii. 27, 28.

^a Matt. vi. 6.

^x James i. 8.

^b Dan. iv. 10.

into the den of lions, than give occasion to any to think that he complied with the king in his idolatrous decree. Further, though it is said that 'he prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime,' we are not to understand that he set open his windows aforetime. His praying publicly at this time, was to show that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his God, whatever it should cost him. Hence, he was so far from being guilty of hypocrisy, that his conduct is one of the most noble instances of zeal for the worship of the true God which we find recorded in scripture.

We proceed to observe that hypocrisy is a reigning sin when we boast of our high attainments in gifts or grace, or set too great a value on ourselves because of the performance of some religious duties, while we neglect others in which the principal part of true godliness consists. Thus the Pharisee paid 'tithe of mint, anise, and cummin,' while he 'omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.'^c—Again, hypocrisy, as a reigning sin, consists in exclaiming against and censuring others for lesser faults, while we allow greater in ourselves; like those whom our Saviour speaks of who 'behold the mote that is in their brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in their own';^d or, according to that proverbial way of speaking, 'strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.' These are very fond of exposing the ignorance of others; though they have no experimental, saving knowledge of divine truth in themselves. Or they are very froward to blame the coldness and lukewarmness which they see in some; while, at the same time, that zeal which they express in their whole conduct, is rather to advance themselves than the glory of God.—Further, persons are guilty of hypocrisy as a reigning sin when they make a gain of godliness,^e or of their pretensions to it. Thus Balaam prophesied for a reward; and accordingly it is said that 'he loved the wages of unrighteousness.'^f—Finally, persons are guilty of it who make a profession of religion because it is uppermost, and are as ready to despise and cast it off, when it is reproached, or when they are likely to suffer for it. Thus the Pharisees, how much soever they seemed disposed to embrace Christ when attending on John's ministry; yet afterwards, when they saw that their doing so was contrary to their secular interest, they were 'offended in him,' and prejudiced against him, and said, 'Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?'^g

This sin of hypocrisy, which is a practical lie, has a tendency to corrupt and vitiate all our pretensions to religion. It is like 'the dead fly,' mentioned by Solomon, 'that causeth the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour';^h and it will, in the end, bring on those who are guilty of it many sore judgments, some of which are spiritual. Thus it is said of the heathen, that 'because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge; he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient,'ⁱ &c. As for the false hope and vain confidence which the hypocrite entertains, it shall leave him in despair and confusion,^k and be attended with unspeakable horror of conscience.^l On this account hypocrites are said to 'heap up wrath,' and bring on themselves a greater degree of condemnation than others.^m We have thus considered this commandment as broken by speaking or acting that which is contrary or prejudicial to truth.

III. We proceed to consider that this commandment is broken by our doing that which is injurious to our neighbour's good name, either by words or actions. This is done in two ways, either before his face, or behind his back.

1. Doing injury to another, by speaking against him before his face. It is true, we give him hereby the liberty of vindicating himself; yet if the thing be false which is alleged against him, proceeding from malice and envy, our speaking against him is a crime of a very heinous nature. This crime is committed by those who, in courts of judicature, commence and carry on malicious prosecutions. Here the plaintiff, the witness, the advocate who manages the cause, the jury who bring in a false verdict, and the judge who passes sentence contrary to law or evi-

^c Matt. xxiii. 23, 24.

^d Chap. vii. 3, 5.

^e 1 Tim. vi. 5.

^f 2 Pet. ii. 15.

^g John vii. 48.

^h Eccles. x. 1.

ⁱ Rom. i. 21, 22, 28.

^k Job viii. 13—15

^l Job xxvii. 18; Isa. xxxiii. 14.

^m Job xxxvi. 13; Matt. xxiii. 14.

dence as well as the dictates of his own conscience, with a design to crush and ruin him who is maliciously prosecuted, are all notoriously guilty of the breach of this commandment. Again, those may be said to do that which is injurious to their neighbour's good name, who reproach them in common conversation. This is a sin too much committed in this licentious age; as though men were not accountable to God for what they speak, as well as for other parts of the conduct of life.

There are several things which persons make the subject of their reproach. Among these are the defects and blemishes of nature; such as lameness, blindness, deafness, impediment of speech, meanness of capacity, or actions which proceed from a degree of distraction. Many suppose that the apostle Paul was reproached for some natural deformity in his body or impediment in his speech. This is inferred from his representing some as saying, 'His letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.'ⁿ Elsewhere, also, he commends the Galatians for not despising him on this account. 'My temptation,' says he, 'which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.'^o The aggravations of this sin of reproaching persons for their natural infirmities, are very great. For, it is a finding fault with the workmanship of the God of nature, a thinking meanly of a person for that which is not chargeable on him as a crime, and which he can by no means redress. It is a censuring those who are, in some respects, objects of compassion; especially if the reproach be levelled against the defects of the mind, or any degree of distraction. It also argues a great deal of pride and unthankfulness to God, for those natural endowments which we have received from him, though we do not improve them to his glory.

Here we may take occasion to say something respecting the children's sin who reproached Elisha for his baldness, and the punishment which followed, namely, his 'cursing them in the name of the Lord;' and 'two and forty' of them being 'torn in pieces by two she-bears out of the wood.'^p It may be inquired by some, whether this was not too great an instance of passion in that holy man, and too severe a punishment inflicted; inasmuch as they who reproached him are called 'little children.' The children, however, were not so little as not to be able to know their right hand from their left, or to discern between good and evil; for such are not usually trusted out of their parents' sight; nor would they have gathered themselves together in a body, or gone some distance from the city, on purpose to insult the prophet, as it is plain they did, understanding that he was to come there at that time. They must, therefore, have been boys of a sufficient age to commit the most presumptuous sin; and hence not too young to suffer such a punishment as followed. Again, their sin was great, in mocking a grave old man, who ought to have been honoured for his age, and a prophet, whom they should have esteemed for his character. In despising him, they despised God who called and sent him. Further, Bethel, where they lived, was the chief seat of idolatry, in which these children had been trained up; and it was a prevailing inclination to it, together with an hatred of the true religion, which occasioned their reproaching and casting contempt on the prophet. Finally, the manner of expression argues a great deal of profaneness, 'Go up, thou bald head;' that is, either go up to Bethel, speaking in an insulting way, as if they had said, 'You may go there, but you will not be regarded by the people; for they value no such men as you are;' or rather, it is as if they had said, 'You pretend that your predecessor Elijah is gone up to heaven; do you go up after him, that you may trouble us no longer with your prophecies.' These children, then, though young in years, were hardened in sin; and their conduct was not so much an occasional mocking of the prophet for his baldness, as a public contrivance, and tumultuous opposition to his ministry; which is a very great crime, and accordingly, was attended with a just resentment in the prophet, and followed by that punishment which was inflicted.

Some reproach persons for their sinful infirmities; and do so in such a way that they are styled 'fools' who 'make a mock of sin.'^q We are guilty of this when we reflect on persons for sins committed before their conversion. These they have

repented of, and God has forgiven ; so that they should not be now charged against them, as a matter of reproach. Thus the Pharisee reproached the poor penitent woman, who stood weeping at our Saviour's feet, and said within himself, ' If this man were a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.'^r This reproach respected not her present but her former condition. Again, persons are ' fools who make a mock of sin,' when they reproach others with levity of spirit for the sins they are guilty of at present ; as when the shameful actions of a drunken man are made the subject of laughter ; which ought not to be thought of without regret or pity.

It may be objected that sin renders a person vile, and is really a reproach to him ; so that it may be charged upon him as such : especially as it is said concerning the righteous man, ' In his eyes a vile person is contemned.'^s Now, we are far from asserting that it is a sin to reprove sin, and show the person who commits it his vileness, and the reason he has to reproach and charge himself with it, and loathe himself for it. But the contempt which is to be cast on a vile person, does not consist in making him the subject of laughter, as though it were a light matter for him to dishonour God as he does ; for his conduct should occasion grief in all true believers, as the psalmist says, ' I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy word.'^t Accordingly, when the psalmist advises to 'contemn' such an one, the meaning is, that we should not make him our intimate or bosom friend ; or that if he be in advanced circumstances in the world, we are not to flatter him in his sin ; whereby, especially when it is public, he forfeits that respect which would otherwise be due to him. In this sense we are to understand Mordecai's contempt of Haman.^u

Here we may take occasion to distinguish between reproofing sin, and reproaching persons for it. The former is to be done with sorrow of heart, and compassion expressed to the sinner ; as our Saviour reproofed Jerusalem, and, at the same time, ' wept over it.'^x But, on the other hand, reproach is attended with hatred of him, and a secret pleasure taken in his sin and ruin. Again, reproof for sin ought to be with a design to reclaim the offender ; whereas, reproach tends only to expose, exasperate, and harden him in his sin. Moreover, reproof for sin ought to be given with the greatest seriousness and conviction of the evil and danger which will follow ; whereas they who reproach persons, charge sin on them under the influence of their own passions, without any concern for the dishonour which they bring to God and religion, or desire for their repentance and reformation.

Sometimes that which is the highest ornament and greatest excellency of a Christian, is turned to his reproach. In particular, some have been reproached for extraordinary gifts, which God has been pleased to confer on them. Thus the spirit of prophesy was sometimes reckoned, by profane persons, the effect of distraction.^y Joseph was reproached by his brethren, in a taunting way, with the character of a dreamer ; because of the prophetic intimation which he had from God, in a dream, concerning the future state of his family.^z When the apostles were favoured with the extraordinary gift of tongues, and preached to men of different nations, in their own language, ' some were amazed, and others mocked them, and said, These men are full of new wine.'^a—Again, raised affections, and extraordinary instances of zeal for the glory of God, have been derided, as though they were matter of reproach. Thus Michal reproached David, when ' he danced before the ark ;'^b he being actuated by an holy zeal, and transport of joy ; and so far from reckoning it a reproach, he counted that which she called vile, glorious.—Further, spiritual experiences of the grace of God have sometimes been turned by those who are strangers to them, to their reproach, and termed no other than madness. Thus when the apostle Paul related the gracious dealings of God with him in his conversion, Festus charges him with being ' beside himself.'^c—Again, a person's being made use of by God, to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, has been charged against him, as though it were rebellion. Thus the Jews told Pilate, when he sought to release

^r Luke vii. 37—39.

^x Luke xix 41, 42.

^b 2 Sam. vi. 20.

^s Psal. xv. 4.

^y 2 Kings ix. 11.

^c Acts xxvi. 24.

^t Psal. cxix. 158.

^z Gen. xxxvii. 13

^u Esther iii. 2.

^a Acts ii. 13.

Jesus, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.'^d And that reformation which the apostles were instrumental in making in the world, by preaching the gospel, is styled 'turning the world upside down.'^e—Further, humility of mind in owning our weakness, as not being able to comprehend some divine mysteries contained in the gospel, is reckoned matter of reproach by many; who call it implicit faith, and admitting of the greatest absurdities in matters of religion.—Further, giving glory to the Spirit, as the Author of all grace and peace, and desiring to draw nigh to God in prayer, or engage in other holy duties, by his assistance, is reproached by some, as though it were enthusiasm, and as though they who desire or are favoured with this privilege, were pretenders to extraordinary revelation.—Again, a being conscientious in abstaining from those sins which abound in a licentious age, or reproving and bearing our testimony against those who are guilty of them, is reproached with the character of hypocrisy, preciseness, and being righteous overmuch.—Finally, separating from communion with a false church, and renouncing those doctrines which tend to pervert the gospel of Christ, is called by some heresy. Thus the Papists brand the Protestants with the reproachful name of heretics. But we may answer, that this is rather our glory, and confess that 'after the way which they call heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers.'^f This sin is attended with many aggravations; for God reckons it as a contempt cast on himself.^g They who are guilty of it, also, plainly intimate that they pretend not to be what they reproach and deride in others; so that if the latter be in the right way to heaven, those who reproach them discover that they desire not to go thither. In their whole conduct, indeed, they act as though they were endeavouring to banish all religion out of the world, by methods of scorn and ridicule; and if their design should take effect, this earth would be but a small degree better than hell.

When we are thus reproached for the sake of God and religion, let us not render railing for railing; but look on those who revile us as objects of pity,^h who do more hurt to themselves than they can do to us. Moreover, let us reflect on our own sins, which provoke God to suffer our being reproached; and beg of him that he would turn it to his own glory and our good. Thus David did, when he was unjustly and barbarously cursed and railed at by Shimei.ⁱ We ought also to esteem religion the more, because of the opposition and contempt which it meets with from the enemies of God. That very contempt and opposition, indeed, afford us some evidence of the truth and excellency of religion; as our Saviour says concerning his disciples, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'^k Again, when we are reviled for the sake of Christ and religion, let us take encouragement from the consideration that we have the same treatment which he and all his saints have met with.^l Let us also consider that there are many promises annexed to our being so reviled.^m It is also an advantage to our character as Christians; for hereby it appears, that we are not on their side who are Christ's avowed enemies. Hence, we should reckon their reproach our glory;ⁿ or as the apostle says, 'take pleasure in reproaches for Christ's sake,'^o or, as it is said elsewhere, 'Rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'^p Thus concerning our doing injury to our neighbour, by speaking against him before his face.

2. We shall now consider the injury which is done to others by speaking against them behind their back. This those are guilty of who raise or invent false reports of their neighbours, or spread those which are uncertain, or divulge those which ought to be kept secret, with a design to take away their good name. These are called talebearers, backbiters, slanderers; who offer injuries to others who are not in a capacity to defend themselves.^q Their malicious reports are often, indeed, prefaced with a pretence of great respect to the person whom they speak against.

d John xix. 12.

e Acts xvii. 6.

f Chap. xxiv. 14.

g Luke x. 16.

h 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13; 1 Pet. ii. 23.

i 2 Sam. xvi. 10, 12.

k John xv. 19.

l Heb. xii. 2, 3; Chap. xi. 36.

m Matt. v. 11, 12; 1 Pet. iv. 14.

n Heb. xi. 26.

o 2 Cor. xii. 10.

p Acts v. 41.

q Lev. xix. 16.

They seem very much surprised at and sorry for what they are going to relate ; and sometimes signify their hope, that it may not be true ; and desire that what they report may be concealed, while they make it their business themselves to divulge it. But this method will not secure their own reputation, while they are endeavouring to ruin that of another. They propagate slander in various ways. They do so by pretending that a person is guilty of a fault which he is innocent of. Thus our Saviour and John the Baptist were charged with immoral practices, which there was not the least shadow or pretence for.^r Again, they do so by divulging a real fault which has been acknowledged and repented of, and therefore ought to be concealed ;^s or when there is no pretence for making it public, but what arises from malice and hatred of the person. Further, they do so by aggravating faults or representing them worse than they are. Thus Absalom's sin in murdering Amnon was very great ; but he who brought tidings of it to David, represented it worse than it was, when he said that Absalom had 'slain all the king's sons.'^t Again, persons propagate slander by reporting the bad actions of men, and, at the same, overlooking and extenuating their good ones ; and so not doing them the justice of setting one in the balance against the other. Further, they do so by putting the worst and most injurious construction on actions which are really excellent. Thus, because our Saviour admitted publicans and sinners into his presence, and did them good by his doctrine, the Jews reproached him as though he were 'a friend of publicans and sinners,'^u taking the word 'friend' in the worst sense, as signifying an approver of them. Finally, persons propagate slander by reporting things to the prejudice of others, which are grounded on such slender evidence, that they themselves hardly believe them, or at least would not, had they not a design to make use of them, to defame them. Thus Sanballat, in his letter to Nehemiah, tells him that 'he and the Jews thought to rebel ; and built the wall of Jerusalem, that he might be their king ;'^x which it can hardly be supposed the enemy himself gave any credit to. Thus concerning the instances in which persons backbite or raise false reports on others.

We may add, that as they are guilty who raise slanders ; so are they who listen to and endeavour to propagate them. It is not, indeed, the mere hearing of a report which we cannot but think to be attended with malice and slander which will render us guilty, for that we may not be able to avoid ; but it is our encouraging him who raises or spreads it which renders us guilty. In particular, we sin when we hear malicious reports, if we conceal them from the party concerned in them, and so deny him the justice of answering what is said against him, in his own vindication, or when we do not reprove those who make a practice of slandering and backbiting others, in order to our bringing them to shame and repentance ; and, most of all, when we contract an intimacy with those who are guilty of this sin, and are too easy in giving credit to what they say, though not supported by sufficient evidence, but on the other hand, carrying in it the appearance of envy and resentment. Thus concerning the sins forbidden in this commandment.

We shall close this Head by proposing some remedies against slander. If the thing reported to another's prejudice be true, we ought to consider that we are not without many faults ourselves ; which we would be unwilling, if others knew them, that they should divulge. If the thing reported be doubtful, we, by reporting it, may give occasion to some to believe it to be true, without sufficient evidence ; so that our neighbour will receive real prejudice from that which to us is only matter of surmise and conjecture. But if, on the other hand, what is reported be apparently false, the sin is still the greater ; and, by inventing and propagating it, the highest injustice is offered to the innocent, while we, at the same time, are guilty of a known and presumptuous sin. Again, such a way of exposing men answers no good end ; nor is it a means of reclaiming them. Further, by our inventing or propagating slander, we lay ourselves open to the censure of others ; and by endeavouring to take away our neighbour's good name, endanger the loss of our own.

^r Matt. xi. 18, 19.

^u Matt. xi. 19.

^s Chap. xviii. 15.

^x Nehem. vi. 6.

^t 2 Sam. xiii. 30.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

QUESTION CXLVI. *Which is the tenth commandment?*

ANSWER. The tenth commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

QUESTION CXLVII. *What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?*

ANSWER. The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbour, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him tend unto and further all that good which is his.

QUESTION CXLVIII. *What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?*

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment, are, discontent with our own estate, envying, and grieving at the good of our neighbour, together with all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.

THE general design of this commandment is to regulate and set bounds to our desires; and it contains a prohibition of coveting those things which belong not to us. It is not to be split into two commandments, as the Papists pretend. They suppose that, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,' is the ninth, and, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,' &c. is the tenth commandment. But these are only particular instances of the breach of the same commandment. The argument taken from the repetition of the words, 'Thou shalt not covet,' is so very weak and inconclusive, that it would hardly have been made use of by them, had they not thought it necessary, some way or other, to make up the number ten; having, as was observed under a foregoing Head, determined the second commandment not to be distinct from but an appendix to the first.^y

The Duties Required in the Tenth Commandment.

We proceed to consider the duties required in the tenth commandment. These may be reduced to two Heads.

1. Contentment with our own condition. By this we are not to understand that we are to give way to indolence or stupidity, but to exercise a composure of mind, acquiescing in the divine dispensations in every condition of life. Thus the apostle says, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'^z This duty is applicable to all sorts of men. In particular, it is a grace which is to be exercised by those who are in prosperous circumstances in the world. Thus the apostle says, 'I know how to abound,'^a and to be 'full,' as well as 'to suffer need.' We often find that they who have the greatest share of the good things of this world, are so far from being satisfied with it, that their covetousness increases in proportion to their substance. But such ought to consider that their conduct is most unreasonable and ungrateful, and may justly provoke God to take away the blessings which he has given them, or add some circumstance to them which will tend to embitter them. Moreover, it is a giving way to such a temper of mind as renders them really miserable in the midst of their abundance.

But what we shall principally consider, is how the grace of contentment is to be exercised by those who are in an afflicted state, together with the motives and inducements leading to it. We will suppose persons under bodily weakness or pain, which tends much to embitter the comforts of life, by which means they are made uneasy. Indeed, it is impossible, from the nature of the thing, for them not to complain or groan under the burdens which are laid on them; as the psalmist did, who speaks of himself as 'weary of his groaning.'^b Nor is such sense of suffering unlawful, provided they do not repine at, or find fault with, the methods of God's providence, in his dealing with them. There are, however, some things which may induce them to be content. If we consider that the body gave occasion

y See page 315.

z Phil. iv. 11.

a Verse 12.

b Psal. vi. 6.

to the entrance of sin into the world, and bears a part with the soul in all the sins committed and guilt contracted by it, it is no wonder that we find it to have its share in those miseries to which the soul is exposed. Again, bodily diseases are our monitors, to put us in mind of the frailty of our present state. Hence, as they are the harbingers of death, we are forewarned by them to prepare for it, as making sensible advances towards it. Further, the greatest pains to which we are liable, are far short of what Christ endured for us; in which respect our afflictions are comparatively light, and convincingly evident not to be certain indications of our being rejected by God.^c Moreover, as God will not lay more on us than he will enable us to bear; so none of these afflictive dispensations shall have a tendency to separate the soul from Christ. Though we sometimes complain that affliction is a great interruption to the exercise of grace; yet this shall not be charged upon us as our fault, any otherwise than as it is the effect of that sin which is the procuring cause of all affliction. Besides, the heavier our afflictions are at present, the more sweet and comfortable the heavenly rest will be to those who have a well-grounded hope that they shall be brought to it.^d

If our condition be low and poor in the world, we are not without some inducements to be content. Poverty is not in itself a curse, or inconsistent with the love of God; for Christ himself submitted to it;^e and his best saints have been exposed to it, and glorified God under it,^f more than others. Moreover, how poor soever we are, we have more than we brought into the world with us, or than the richest person can carry out of it.^g And they who have least of the world have more than they deserve, or than God was under any obligation to give them.

Suppose we are afflicted in our good name, and do not meet with that love and esteem from the world which might be expected, but, on the other hand, are censured, reproached, and hated by those whom we converse with; we should not be made, beyond measure, uneasy. We have reason to conclude that the esteem of the world is precarious and uncertain; and that they who most deserve it, have often the least of it. Thus our Saviour was one day followed with the caresses of the multitude, shouting forth their Hosannas to him; and the next day the common cry was, 'Crucify him, crucify him.' When the apostles Paul and Barnabas had healed the cripple at Lystra, they could at first hardly restrain the people from offering sacrifice to them; but afterwards the same people joined with the malicious Jews in stoning them.^h And Paul tells the Galatians, that 'if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him;' but, a little after, he complains that he was 'become their enemy, because he told them the truth.'ⁱ Besides, the esteem of men is no farther to be desired than as it may render us useful to them; and if God is pleased to deny this to us, we are not to prescribe to him what measure of respect he shall allot to us from the world, or usefulness in it. Moreover, let us consider that we know more evil abounding in our own heart than others can charge us with. Hence, how much soever they are guilty of injustice to us; our knowledge of ourselves affords us a motive to contentment. Besides, we have not brought that honour to God which we ought; therefore, how just is it for him to deny us that esteem from men which we desire?

Suppose we are afflicted in our relations, there are some motives to contentment. If servants have masters who make their lives uncomfortable, by their unreasonable demands or unjust severity, they ought to consider that their faithfulness and industry will be approved of by God, how much soever it may be disregarded by men; and a conscientious discharge of the duties incumbent on them, in the relation in which they stand, will give them ground to expect a blessing from God, to whom they are herein said to do service, which shall not go unrewarded.^k On the other hand, if masters are afflicted, by reason of the stubborn and unfaithful behaviour, or sloth and negligence, of their servants; let them inquire whether this be not the consequence of their not being so much concerned for their spiritual

^c Eccles. ix. 1. ^d Job iii. 17; 2 Thess. i. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 17. ^e 2 Cor. viii. 9; Matt. viii. 20. ^f 2 Cor. vi. 10. ^g Job i. 21. ^h Acts xiv. 18, 19. ⁱ Gal. iv. 15, 16. ^k Eph. vi. 7, 8.

welfare as they ought, or keeping up strict religion in their families, or whether they have not been more concerned that their servants should obey them, than their great Master who is in heaven.—Again, if parents have undutiful children, who are a grief of heart to them; let them consider, as a motive to contentment, whether they have not formerly neglected their duty to their parents, slighted their counsels, or disregarded their reproofs, or whether they have not reason to charge themselves with the iniquity of their youth, and inquire whether God be not now writing bitter things against them for it, or whether they have not neglected to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These considerations will fence against all repining thoughts at the providence of God, that has brought these troubles upon them. As a farther inducement to make them easy, let them consider, that if the undutiful conduct of their children does not altogether lie at their door, and that if they have been faithful to their children, in praying for and instructing them, God may hear their prayers, and send home their instructions on their hearts, when they themselves are removed out of the world. On the other hand, if children have wicked parents, whose conversation fills them with great uneasiness; let them consider that theirs has been the case of many of God's faithful servants, such as Hezekiah, Josiah, and others. And they may be assured that they shall have no occasion to use that proverb, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'¹

If we are afflicted by reason of the treachery and unfaithfulness of pretended friends, which wound us in the most tender part,^m we may be induced to be content. For we have no ground to expect perfection in the best of men, or that their love and favour is immutable; nor is our conduct always such that we do not often forfeit the respect which we once had from others. Besides, if our friends deal deceitfully with us, or are unfaithful to us, without just ground, they do not act so, without the permission of the wise and overruling providence of God, who sometimes orders such affliction in order to take us off from a dependence upon men, or from expecting too much happiness from them,—which is to be sought for only in himself.ⁿ Moreover, when we find a change in the behaviour of friends towards us, our encouragement is that our chief happiness consists in the unchangeable love of God.^o

When we are afflicted in the loss of friends or near relations, we have also motives to contentment. There is no reversing or altering the decree of God, which fixes the bounds of men's continuance in this world.^p All the comfort we have in friends and relations is a peculiar blessing from God; and he sometimes afflicts us in the loss of them, that he may draw off our affections from the best creature-enjoyments, and induce us to take up our rest entirely in himself. Moreover, we had never any reason to look on our friends as immortal, any more than ourselves; and therefore ought to say as David did when he lost his child, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'^q So far too as self-love is concerned in our bereavements, we have a reason to give a check to the excess of it, by the exercise of self-denial, and say with David, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;'^r or follow the example of Aaron, concerning whom it is said, that, when he lost two of his sons at once, by a public and awful stroke of divine justice, 'he held his peace.'^s

If we are afflicted by the want of success or the many disappointments which attend us, in our lawful callings in the world, we have reason, notwithstanding, to be content. It is the sovereign hand of God which orders our condition, as to the success or disappointments attending our lawful callings; and hence we are not to strive against our Maker, or find fault with his will, who may do what he pleases with his own. Again, a man's happiness does not really consist in the abundance of what he possesses,^t but rather in his having a heart to use it aright. Hence, we ought to say to ourselves, as God did to Baruch, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.'^u Further, the world is a scene of vanity. We have no reason to expect too much from it, and hence ought not to be dejected at the loss

¹ Ezek. xviii. 2.
^q 2 Sam. xii. 23.

^m Psal. lv. 12, 13.
^r Psal. xxxix. 8.

ⁿ Isa. ii. 22.
^s Lev. x. 3.

^o Mal. iii. 6.
^t Luke xii. 15.

^p Job xiv. 9.
^u Jer. xlv. 5.

of it; especially considering that such disappointments are the common lot of all sorts of men. Moreover, the providence of God sometimes denies us the good things of this world, that we may think it our duty and interest to lay up treasures in heaven.

Suppose we meet with afflictions as to our spiritual concerns, being under divine desertion or decays of grace, or wanting a sense of the love of God or those spiritual comforts which we once enjoyed from him; in this condition no believer can or ought to be easy, at least stupid, and unconcerned. But, on the other hand, he ought to be humbled for those sins which may give occasion to it, and press after the enjoyment of what he is, at present, deprived of. Yet contentment, as it is opposed to repining or quarrelling with God, is his present duty; and there are some inducements tending to it. A person may have the truth of grace, when he is destitute of the comfortable sense of it. And there are some great and precious promises made to believers, in this condition.^x Moreover, God has wise ends in such a dispensation; for hereby he brings sin to remembrance, humbles us for it, and guards us against presumption and confidence in our own strength.^y He also puts us upon the exercise of suitable graces;^z and when he is pleased to comfort us after such afflictions, we are better furnished to comfort others in a similar condition.

2. The next thing required in this commandment, is a charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour; so that all our inward motions and affections should lead us to promote and rejoice in his good.^a This charitable frame of spirit ought to be exercised towards those who excel us in gifts or graces. These they receive from the hand of providence, as talents to be improved. Hence, if they have a greater share of them than ourselves, more is required of them in proportion.^b If they excel us in grace, we ought rather to rejoice that, though we bring but little glory to God, others bring more; and it will afford us an evidence of the truth of grace, if, while we are humbled under a sense of our own defects, we are thankful for the honour which is brought to God by others.^c—Again, we ought to exercise a charitable frame of spirit towards those who are in more prosperous circumstances in the world; not envying, grieving, or repining at the providence of God, because their condition is better than ours. We are, therefore, to consider that the most flourishing and prosperous condition in the world is not always the best;^d and that it is not without many temptations which often attend it.^e Besides, if it be not improved to the glory of God, it will bring a greater weight of guilt on their consciences. If, on the other hand, we enjoy communion with God, and the blessings of the upper springs, we have what is much more desirable than the most prosperous condition in the world, without it.^f

The Sins Forbidden in the Tenth Commandment.

We are now led to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These include that corrupt fountain whence the irregularity of our desires proceeds; or the streams which flow from it, and which discover themselves in the lusts of concupiscence in various instances, as well as in our being discontented with our own condition.

1. As to the former of these, namely, the corruption of nature, it must be considered as contrary to the law of God, and consequently forbidden in this commandment. The Pelagians and Papists, indeed, pretend that the law of God respects only the corruption of our actions, which is to be checked and restrained by it, and not the internal habits or principle whence our actions proceed. Accordingly, they take an estimate of the law of God from human laws, which respect only the overt acts of sin, and not those internal inclinations and dispositions which persons have to commit it. But when we speak of the divine laws, we must not take our plan thence; for though man can judge only of outward actions, God

x Isa. liv. 7, 8; Psal. cxii. 4.

a 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7; Rom. xii. 15.

d Psal. xxxvii. 16.

y Psal. xxx. 6, 7.

b Luke xii. 48.

c 1 Tim. vi. 9.

z Psal. xlii. 6. and lxxvii. 6.

e Gal. i. 23, 24; John iii. 26—28, 30.

f Psal. xvi. 5, 6.

judgeth the heart. Hence, the sin which reigns there, cannot but be, in the highest degree, offensive to him. And though the corruption of our nature cannot be altogether prevented or extirpated, by any prescription in the divine law; yet this is the means which God takes to reprove and humble us for it.^g

It is objected that the apostle James distinguishes between lust and sin: 'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.'^h And it is hence inferred that the corruption of nature is not properly sin, and, consequently, not forbidden by the law. But lust may be distinguished from sin, as the habit or corrupt principle is from the act which it produces. Hence, the apostle's meaning in this scripture, is that lust, or irregular desires, are first conceived in the heart, and then actual sins proceed from them in the life; and both are abhorred by God, and contrary to his law. And they seem to be forbidden, in particular, in this tenth commandment.

Here we may observe the various methods which corrupt nature takes, in order to its producing and bringing forth sinful actions. First, the temptation is offered, either by Satan, or the world, with a specious pretence of some advantage which may arise from our compliance with it; and, at the same time, we consider not whether it be lawful or unlawful, and regard not the threatenings which should deter us from it. And we sometimes take occasion, from the pernicious example of the falls and miscarriages of others, to venture on the commission of the same sins; pretending that they are, many of them, more acquainted with scripture than we are; and that there seems to be no ill consequence attending their commission of those sins. Why, then, we ask ourselves, may not we give way to them? We pretend also that many, who have had more fortitude and resolution than we can pretend to, have been overcome by the same temptations; so that it is in vain for us to strive against them. Again, corrupt nature sometimes fills the soul with a secret dislike of the strictness and purity of the law of God; and, at other times, it suggests that there are some dispensations allowed, in compliance with the frailty of nature; and it hence suggests that we may venture on the commission of some sins. At length we take up a resolution that we will try the experiment, whatever be the consequence. Thus lust brings forth sin; which, after it has been, for some time, indulged, is committed with greediness, and persisted in with resolution, and, in the end, brings forth death.

2. We are now to consider the irregularity of those actions which proceed from the corruption of our nature, which are sometimes called the lusts of concupiscence: whereby, without the least show of justice, we endeavour to possess ourselves of those things which belong to our neighbour. Thus Ahab was restless in his own spirit, till he had got Naboth's vineyard into his hand; and, in order to gain his point, joined in a conspiracy to take away his life.ⁱ David also coveted his neighbour's wife; which was one of the greatest blemishes in his life, and brought with it a long train of miseries which attended him in the following part of his reign.^k And Achan coveted those goods which belonged not to him, the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garment;^l which sin proved his ruin.

This sin of covetousness arises from a being discontented with our present condition; so that whatever measure of the blessings of providence we enjoy, we are filled with disquietude of mind, because we are destitute of what we are lusting after. This must be considered as a sin attended with very great aggravations. It unfits us for the performance of holy duties; prevents the exercise of those graces, which are necessary in order to this; and, on the other hand, exposes us to manifold temptations, whereby we are rendered an easy prey to our spiritual enemies.—Again, it is altogether unlike the temper of the blessed Jesus, who expressed an entire resignation to the divine will, under the greatest sufferings.^k Indeed, it is a very great reproach to religion in general, and a discouragement to those who are setting their faces towards it, who will be ready to conclude, from our example, that the consolations of God are small, or that there is not enough in the promises of the covenant of grace to quiet our spirits under their present uneasiness.—Moreover, it is to act as though we expected or desired our portion in this world, or

g Rom. vii. 9.

k 2 Sam. xii. 9—12.

h James i. 15.

l Josh. vi. 21.

i 1 Kings xxi. 4.

m John xviii. 11; Luke xxii. 42.

looked no farther than present things, which is contrary to the practice of the best of God's saints.ⁿ—Further, it tends to cast the utmost contempt on the many mercies we have received or enjoy, which are, as it were, forgotten in unthankfulness; and it is a setting aside of those blessings which the gospel gives us to expect.—Again, it argues an unwillingness to be at God's disposal, and a leaning to our own understandings, as though we knew better than he, what was most conducive to our present and future happiness; and hence it is a tempting of God, a grieving of his Holy Spirit, and has a tendency to provoke him to 'turn to be our enemy, and fight against us.'^o—Further, it deprives us of the present sweetness of other mercies; renders every providence, in our own apprehension, afflictive; and those burdens which would otherwise be light, almost insupportable.—Moreover, if God is pleased to give us what we were discontented and uneasy for the want of, he often sends some great affliction with it. Thus Rachel, in a discontented frame, says, 'Give me children, or else I die.'^p She had, indeed, in some respects, her desire of children; but she died in travail with one of them.^q—Finally, the sin of which we are speaking is such that they who are guilty of it will find it very difficult to be brought to a thorough conviction of the guilt which they contract by it, or to a true repentance for it. Thus Jonah, when under a discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, justified himself, and, as it were, defied God to do his worst against him; so that when it was said to him, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' he replied, in a very insolent manner, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death.'^r The justifying of ourselves under such a frame of spirit, cannot but be highly provoking to God; and whatever we may be prone to allege in our own behalf, will rather aggravate than extenuate the crime.

There are several things which a discontented person is apt to allege in his own vindication, which have a tendency only to enhance his guilt. He pretends, for example, that his natural temper leads him to be uneasy; so that he cannot by any means subdue his passions, or submit to the disposing providence of God. But the corruption of our nature, and its proneness to sin, are no just excuse for our depravity, but rather an aggravation of it; whereby it appears to be more deeply rooted in our hearts. Indeed, our natural inclinations to any sin are increased by indulging it. Hence, in this case, we ought rather to be importunate with God for that grace which may have a tendency to restrain the inordinacy of our affections, and render us willing to acquiesce in the divine dispensations, than to palliate and excuse our sin; for our doing the latter only aggravates our guilt.—Again, some, in excuse for their discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, allege that the injuries which have been offered to them ought to be resented; that they are such as they are not able to bear; and that not to show themselves uneasy under them, would be to encourage persons to insult and trample on them. But while we complain of injuries done us by men, and are prone to meditate revenge against them, we do not consider the great dishonour which we bring to God, and how much we deserve to be made the monuments of his fury, so that we should not obtain forgiveness from him, who are so prone to resent lesser injuries done to us by our fellow-creatures.^s—Moreover, others excuse their discontent, by alleging the greatness of their afflictions; that their burden is almost insupportable, so that they are pressed out of measure, above strength, and are ready to say with Job, 'Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning.'^t But our afflictions are not so great as our sins, which are the procuring cause of them; nor are they greater than some which befall others who are better than ourselves. Indeed, by indulging a discontented frame of spirit, we render them heavier than they would otherwise be.—Some, again, pretend that they are discontented and uneasy because the affliction they are under was altogether unexpected; so that they were unprovided for it, and so less able to bear it. But a Christian ought daily to expect afflictions in this miserable and sinful world, at least so far as not to be unprovided for them, or think it strange that he should be exercised with them.^u We have received many unlooked-for mercies; and why should we be uneasy because

n 2 Cor. iv. 18.

r Jonah iv. 9.

o Isa. lxiii. 10.

s Matt. xviii. 23, et seq.

p Gen. xxx. 1.

t Job xxiii. 2.

q Chap. xxxv. 19.

u 1 Pet. iv. 12.

we meet with unexpected afflictions, and not rather set the one against the other? Besides, God is not obliged to forewarn us or give us notice of the trials which he designs we shall pass under; and when he deals thus with us, it discovers to us the necessity of our being always provided for them. Some of God's best children, too, have often been surprised with afflictive providences, and yet have been enabled to exercise contentment under them. Thus the messengers who brought Job heavy and unexpected tidings of one affliction immediately following another,^x did not overthrow his faith, or make him discontented under the hand of God; for, notwithstanding all, 'he worshipped and blessed the name of the Lord.'^y—Again, others allege that the change which is made in their circumstances in the world, from a prosperous to an afflicted condition in life, is so great, and lies with such weight upon their spirits, that it is impossible for them to be easy under it. But, when God gave us the good things we are deprived of, he reserved to himself the liberty of taking them away when he pleased, designing thus to show his absolute sovereignty over us. Hence, it is our duty before any affliction befalls us, according to the apostle's advice, to 'rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to use the world as not abusing it';^z and, after it befalls us, not to think it strange that we should be deprived of the world, inasmuch as 'the fashion of it passeth away.' Besides, the greater variety of conditions in which we have been or are in the world, afford more abundant experience of those dealings of God with us which are designed as an ordinance for our faith. Hence, instead of being discontented under them, we ought rather to be put on the exercise of those graces which are suitable to the change of our condition; as the apostle says, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.'^a—Further, some allege that they have the greatest reason to be discontented, because of the influence which their afflictions have on their spiritual concerns, as they tend to interrupt their communion with God; and they are often ready to fear that these are indications of his wrath, and, as it were, the beginning of sorrows; which leads them to the very brink of despair. Now, it is certain that nothing more sharpens the edge of afflictions, or has a greater tendency to make us uneasy under them, than such thoughts as these; and not to be sensible of them, would be an instance of the greatest stupidity. Yet if our fears are ill-grounded, as they sometimes are, the uneasiness which arises from them is unwarrantable. Or if we have too much ground for these fears, we are to make use of the remedy which God has provided. Accordingly, we are to have recourse by faith to the blood of Jesus for forgiveness; and our doing so ought to be accompanied with the exercise of true repentance and godly sorrow for sin, without giving way to those despairing apprehensions which sometimes arise from a sense of the greatness of our guilt, as though it set us out of the reach of mercy; for such apprehensions will add an insupportable weight to our burden. And if, under the afflicting hand of God, we are rendered unfit for holy duties, and have no communion with him in them, the reason may be, not the affliction, but that discontented, uneasy frame of spirit which we too much indulge under it. Hence, we are not to allege the affliction as an excuse for that murmuring, repining frame of spirit which we are too apt to discover while exercised with it.

The last thing to be considered is, the remedies against this sin of being discontented with our present condition. Let us, then, have a due sense of that undoubted right which God has to dispose of us and our condition in this world, as he pleases; inasmuch as we are his own.^b—Again, uneasiness under the hand of God, or repining at his dealings when he thinks fit to deprive us of the blessings we once enjoyed, is not the way to recover the possession of them. The best expedient for us to regain them, or some other blessings which are more than an equivalent for them, is our exercising an entire resignation to the will of God, and concluding that all his dispensations are holy, just, and good.—Let us consider, too, that God often designs to make us better by the sharpest trials; which are an ordinance to bring us nearer to himself. Thus David says, 'Before I was afflicted,

x Job i. 13, et seq.
a Phil. iv. 12.

y Ver. 20, 21.
b Matt. xx. 15.

z 1 Cor. vii. 30.

I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word.'^c—Moreover, we ought to consider that God's design in these dispensations is to 'try our faith,' that it 'may be found afterwards unto praise, honour and glory,' as it will be, with respect to every true believer, 'at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'^d—We may add, that there are many promises of the presence of God, which have a tendency, not only to afford relief against uneasiness or dejection of spirit, but to give us the greatest encouragement under the sorest afflictions, particularly that comprehensive promise, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'^e

MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

QUESTION CXLIX. *Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?*

ANSWER. No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

HAVING considered man's duty and obligation to keep the commandments of God, we are now led to speak of him as unable to keep them, and, on the other hand, as chargeable with the daily breach of them, which is an evidence of the imperfection of the present state. We endeavoured, under a foregoing Answer,^f to prove that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life ; so that all the boasts of the Pelagians and others, who defend the possibility of attaining perfection here, are vain and unwarrantable. We also considered the reasons why God orders that it should be so ; and therefore we shall, without enlarging so much on this subject as otherwise we might have done, principally take notice of what is to be observed in this Answer, under two general Heads.

The Nature and Limits of Man's Inability.

We shall notice first in what respects, and with what limitations, man is said to be unable to keep the commandments of God. It is said that no man is able perfectly to keep them. By 'no man' here we are to understand, as is observed in the Shorter Catechism,^g no mere man ; so that our Saviour is excepted, who yielded perfect obedience in our nature. But there is another limitation, namely, that no man is able to keep the commandments since the fall ; denoting that man, in his state of innocency, was able perfectly to keep the commandments of God. For he was made upright, and had the image of God, which consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness,^h stamped on his soul ; having the law of God written in his heart, and power to fulfil it.ⁱ Indeed, to suppose the contrary, would be a reflection upon the divine government, and would argue man to have been created under a natural necessity of sinning and perishing ; to suppose which is contrary to the goodness, holiness, and justice of God. Moreover, it is observed that no man is able, in this life, perfectly to keep God's commandments. An intimation is thus made that the glorified saints in heaven will be enabled to yield perfect obedience, notwithstanding the many imperfections they are now liable to. Again, as man is not able, of himself, or without the aids of divine grace, to obey God ; so he is not to expect such assistance from him as shall enable him to obey him perfectly. There is no doubt that the grace of God could free us from all the remains of sin in this world, as well as in our passing from it to heaven ; but we have no ground to conclude that it will. For 'the whole creation' is liable to the curse, which was consequent upon man's first apostasy from God ; and under this it 'groaneth' till the present day.^k Nor shall it be delivered from it, till the scene of time and things shall be changed, and the saints shall be fully possessed of what they are

^c Psal. cxix. 67.

^f See Quest. lxxviii.

ⁱ See Quest. xvii. Sect. 'Man Created after the Image of God.'

^d 1 Pet. i. 7.

^g See Quest. lxxxii.

^e Heb. xiii. 5.

^h Eccles. vii. 29 ; Gen. i. 27.

^k Rom. viii. 22, 23.

now waiting for, namely, the 'adoption, or the redemption of their bodies.' Besides, God is pleased to deny his people that perfection of holiness here which they shall attain to hereafter, that he may give them daily occasion to exercise the duties of self-denial, mortification of sin, faith and repentance, which redound to his own glory and their spiritual advantage.

The Uniform and Constant Display of Man's Inability.

We are now led to consider that we daily break the commandments of God, in thought, word, and deed.

1. We do so in thought; namely, when the mind is conversant about sinful objects, in such a way that it contracts defilement. It is a sign that the wickedness of man is very great, when 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil,' and that 'continually.'¹—Now, thoughts of men may be said to be sinful when they choose, delight in, and are daily conversant about things which are vain, empty of what is good, and have no tendency to the glory of God, or the spiritual advantage either of themselves or others. The least vain thought which contains an excursion from our duty to God, brings some degree of guilt with it. But when the mind is wholly taken up with vanity, so that it is turned aside from or takes no delight in those things which are of the highest importance, it will become vitiated and alienated from the life of God.—Again, the thoughts of men may be said to be sinful, when they are not fixed, or intensely set, on God and divine things, when engaged in holy duties. This may happen either when worldly cares or business, how lawful soever they may be at other times, have a tendency to divert our thoughts; or when our minds are conversant about spiritual things unseasonably, so as to be diverted from our present design. The latter case occurs, for example, when we are joining with others in prayer, and when—instead of bearing a part with them in the exercise of faith and other graces, or of our thoughts being employed about the same object with theirs—we are meditating on some other divine subject foreign to the occasion.—Further, our thoughts may be said to be sinful, when they are conversant about spiritual things without suitable affections, and, consequently, meditating on them as common things, in which we are not much concerned; as when we are destitute of those holy desires after God, or delight in him, when drawing nigh to him in holy duties, which his law requires. This will more evidently appear when, by comparing the frame of our spirit in these duties with what we observe it to be in other instances, we find that our affections are easily raised when engaged in matters of less importance, but stupid and unconcerned about our eternal welfare, in holy duties. Such a state of mind is accompanied with hardness of heart and impenitence, and sometimes with uneasiness and weariness, as though they were a burden to us. On the other hand, our affections may be raised in these duties, and yet we be chargeable with a sinfulness of thought while engaging in them. This happens when the affections are raised by things of less importance, while other things which are more affecting are not regarded. A person, for example, may meditate on Christ's sufferings, and be very much affected with and enraged at the treachery of Judas who betrayed him, or the barbarity of the Jews who crucified him; while he is not in the least affected with the sin of the world which was the occasion of his death, or with the greatness of his love, which moved him to submit to it.—Again, our affections, when raised in holy duties, are sinful, when they are all that we depend upon for justification and acceptance in the sight of God, and when we vainly suppose that our tears will wash away our sins, while we are destitute of faith in the blood of Christ; or when we are concerned about the misery consequent on our sins, but are not in the least inclined to hate them, nor grieved at the dishonour brought by them to the name of God.—Let us here consider the causes of this state of the affections, and the remedies against it. If we do not find that our affections are raised in religious exercises, as they have been in times past, we ought to inquire into the reason; whether the evil be not attended with some great backslidings from God, which

might first occasion it. Sometimes it proceeds from a neglect of holy duties, either public or private; at other times, from presumptuous sins, committed, or continued in, with impenitence. We often find, too, that our being too much embarrassed with the profits or pleasures of this world, or immoderately engaged in our pursuit of them, stupifies and damps our affections, as to religious matters, so that they are seldom or never raised in holy duties. As to the remedies against this stupid and unaffected frame of spirit; we must not only repent of, but abstain from, those sins which have been the occasion of it; meditate on those subjects most suitable to our case, which have a tendency to inflame our love to Christ, and desire after him, and our zeal for his glory; and often confess and bewail our stupidity and unbecoming behaviour in holy duties; earnestly imploring the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, to bring us into, and keep us in, a right frame of spirit for them.

Again, we have reason to charge ourselves with sin, when guilty of blasphemous thoughts; when we have, by degrees, brought on ourselves a disregard of God, either by living in the neglect of holy duties, or allowing ourselves in the practice of known sins, when before we were followed with blasphemous thoughts, we found that we gave way to some doubts about the divine perfections, or, through the ignorance, pride, and vanity of our minds, contracted an habitual disregard to or neglect of that holy reverence with which we ought to meditate on them; when we can hear those execrable oaths or curses by which some profanely blaspheme the name of God, without expressing our resentment with the utmost abhorrence and detestation; or when we find, that, being followed with blasphemous thoughts, our hearts are too prone to give in to them, as though they were the sentiments of our mind, whereby we do, as it were, consent to them, instead of rejecting them with the utmost aversion. But, on the other hand, blasphemous thoughts are not always to be charged on us as a sin. Sometimes they are chargeable on Satan, who, in regard to them, acts according to his character as God's open enemy, and endeavours to instil into us the same ideas which he himself has. These thoughts may be charged on him, when they are hastily injected into our minds, not being the result of choice or deliberation, but are a kind of violence offered to our imagination; and when we cannot but discover the greatest detestation of them, as well as of that enemy of souls from whom they take their rise; and when, at the same time, we are enabled to exercise the contrary graces, and betake ourselves to God with faith and prayer, that he would rebuke the devil, and preserve our consciences undefiled, under this sore temptation, which we cannot but reckon one of the greatest afflictions that befalls us in this world. Thus concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts.

2. We are farther said daily to break the commandments of God in word. The apostle James speaks of the tongue as 'an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.'^m Evil-speaking, as was observed concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts, is attended with a greater or a less degree of guilt, as the vanity of the mind, and the wickedness of the heart, more or less discover themselves in it. Our Saviour speaks of the accountableness of man in the day of judgment for 'every idle word;'ⁿ intimating that there is no sin so small but what is displeasing to an holy God, a violation of his law, and brings with it a degree of guilt, in proportion to its nature. These, indeed, are the lowest instances of the sinfulness of words. There are others of so heinous a nature that they can hardly be reckoned consistent with true godliness, such as defaming and malicious words, which are sometimes compared to 'a sword,' or 'arrows,'^o or 'a serpent's tongue,' that leaves a sting and poison behind it.^p But the sinfulness of our words extends itself yet farther, as they are directed against the blessed God; when persons 'set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth;'^q when they give themselves the liberty to talk profanely about sacred things, and openly blaspheme the name and perfections of God. This degree of impiety, indeed, all are not chargeable with. We may say, however, that should God mark the iniquity of our words, as well as of our thoughts, who could stand?

3. We are said to break the commandments of God by deeds, that is, by com-

^m James iii. 8.

ⁿ Matt. xii. 36.

^o Psal. lvii. 4.

^p Psal. cxi. 3.

^q Psal. lxxiii. 9.

mitting those sins which are contrived in the heart, and uttered with our tongues. These have been considered under their respective heads, as violations respectively of the ten commandments, or doing those things which are forbidden in them. We therefore pass them over in this place, and proceed to speak concerning the aggravations of sin.

THE DEGREES OF SIN.

QUESTION CL. *Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves and in the sight of God?*

ANSWER. All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous: but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

THOUGH all sins are objectively infinite, and equally opposite to the holiness of God; yet there are some circumstances attending them of so pernicious a tendency that they render one sin more heinous than another; so that it is not to be thought of, without the greatest horror and resentment, and it exposes the sinner to a sorer condemnation, if it be not forgiven. Such sins strike at the very essentials of religion, and tend, as much as in us lies, to sap its foundation; as when men deny the being and perfections of God, and practically disown their obligation to yield obedience to him. Moreover, some sins against the second table, which more immediately respect our neighbour, are more heinous than others, in proportion to the degree of injury which they do him. Thus the taking away of the life of another, is more injurious, and consequently more aggravated, than merely the hating of him; which is, nevertheless, a very great crime. Again, the same sin, whether against the commandments of the first or of the second table, may be said to be more or less heinous, in proportion to the degree of obstinacy, deliberation, malice or enmity against God, with which it is committed. But these things will more evidently appear under the following Answer.

THE AGGRAVATIONS OF SIN.

QUESTION CLI. *What are those aggravations which make some sins more heinous than others?*

Aggravations from the Persons offending.

ANSWER. Sins receive their aggravations,

I. From the persons offending, if they be of riper age, greater experience, or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office; guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others.

Sins are greater than otherwise they would be, when committed by those whose age and experience ought to have taught them better. Thus Elihu says, 'A multitude of years should teach wisdom.'^r Many things would be a reproach to persons of age and experience, which are more agreeable to the character of children, than those who are advanced in age. Again, if persons have had large experience of the grace of God, and been eminent for their profession, or gifts conferred on them, these circumstances will render a sin committed by them more aggravated; for where much is given, a proportionate improvement is expected, and where great pretensions are made to religion, acting disagreeably to it enhances guilt and renders sin more heinous. Again, when a person is in an eminent station or office in the world or the church, so that either he is a guide to others, or the eyes of many are upon him, who will be apt to follow and receive prejudice by his example, if he commit a public and open sin, it is more aggravated than if it had been committed

by another. Thus God bids the prophet Ezekiel 'see what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery.'^s And the prophet Jeremiah speaks of those who ought to have been guides to the people, namely, the priests and the prophets,^t who transgressed against the Lord; and charges their transgression on them as an extraordinary instance of wickedness; which their character in the world and the church rendered more heinous, though it was exceedingly heinous in itself.

Aggravations from the Parties offended.

II. Sins receive their aggravations, from the parties offended; if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship; against Christ, and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many.

1. Though there is no sin but what may be said to be committed against God; yet some sins are more immediately against him, as they carry in them a contempt of his attributes and worship; whereby his name and ordinances are profaned, and the glory which is stamped on them little esteemed.^u Other sins reflect dishonour on our Lord Jesus Christ; either on his person, when we conclude him to be, or at least to act, as if he were no other than a mere creature; or on his offices, when we refuse to receive instruction from him as a prophet, or to depend on his righteousness as a priest in order to our justification and acceptance in the sight of God, or to submit to him as a king who is able to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies, or when we despise his grace and neglect that salvation which he has purchased, and offers in the gospel.^x Again, our sins are aggravated, when they are committed against the person of the Holy Ghost; when we deny him to be a divine person, or the author of the work of regeneration, supposing that grace takes its rise from ourselves, rather than from him; or when we do not desire to be led by the Spirit, or seek his divine influence, in order to our guidance, but, on the other hand, resist his holy motions and impressions, and act contrary to those convictions which he is pleased to grant us, by which means we are said to 'grieve' and 'quench the Spirit';^y also when we reject and set ourselves against the witness of the Spirit, either by concluding that assurance of our interest in the love of God may be attained without it, and reckon all pretences to it no better than enthusiasm, or by supposing that the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God, without regard had to the work of sanctification, which always accompanies, and is an evidence of it, and so take that comfort to ourselves which does not proceed from the Spirit of holiness.

2. Sins are aggravated as committed more immediately or directly against men, and particularly those to whom we stand related in the bonds of nature, or who have laid us under the greatest obligations by acts of friendship to us. This is applicable to inferiors, who ought to pay a deference to their superiors. Those sins which are committed by such, contain the highest instance of ingratitude, and are contrary to the laws or dictates of nature, and therefore proportionately aggravated. Moreover, if sins are committed against the saints, they are reckoned by God an instance of contempt cast on himself, whose image the saints are said to bear; and much more are they reckoned so if committed against them as saints.^z But though we do not proceed to this degree of wickedness, our crime is said to be greatly aggravated, when we lay a stumbling-block before those who are weak in the faith, which may tend to discourage them in the ways of God; for, by acting thus, we do what in us lies to 'destroy those for whom Christ died.'^a This is an injury done, not so much to their bodies, as to their souls; which are wounded, and brought into great perplexity thereby. We must distinguish, however, between an offence given, and one unjustly taken. It is one thing for persons to be offended at that which is our indispensable duty,—in which case we are not to regard the senti-

^s Ezek. viii. 12.

^t Jer. xxiii. 11, 14.

^u Mal. i. 3, 4.

^x Heb. ii. 3.

^y Ephes. iv. 7; 1 Thess. v. 19.

Luke xvi. 16; Matt. xii. 6.

^a Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11.

ments of those who attempt to discourage us from it, or censure us for the performance of it; and it is another thing to give offence in matters which are in themselves indifferent, and might, without any prejudice, be avoided. In this case a compliance with the party offended seems to be our duty; especially if the offence takes its rise from conscience, rather than humour and corruption, and if our not complying with him would tend very much to discourage and weaken his hands in the ways of God, and therefore may be reckoned an aggravation of our sin. Moreover, it is a farther aggravation of sin committed, when it appears to be contrary to the common good of all men. This guilt may be said to be contracted when there is an endeavour to hinder the success or preaching of the gospel;^b or otherwise, when the sin of one man brings down the judgments of God on a whole church or body of people. Of the latter kind was Achan's sin.^c

Aggravations from the Nature and Quality of the Offence.

III. Sins are aggravated from the nature and quality of the offence; if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins; if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation; if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience; public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments, and our own prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men; if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.

Sin is aggravated when it is committed against the express letter of the law; so that there remains no manner of doubt whether it be a sin or a duty. To venture on the commission of what plainly appears to us to be unlawful, is to sin with great boldness and presumption, whereby the crime is very much aggravated.^d—Again, sin is aggravated when it contains a breach of several of the commandments, and may be reckoned a complicated crime. Of this kind was the sin of David in the matter of Uriah, in which he was guilty of murder, adultery, dissimulation, injustice, &c.; also Ahab's sin against Naboth, which included not only covetousness, but perjury, murder, oppression, and injustice.—Sins are more aggravated when they break forth in words or outward actions, than if they were only conceived in the heart. It is true, sin in the heart has some peculiar aggravations, as it takes deeper root, becomes habitual, and is entertained with a secret delight and pleasure, and as it is the source and fountain whence actual sins proceed. Yet when that which was before conceived in the heart is discovered by words or actions, its being so adds an aggravation to it, as it brings a more public dishonour to God, and often a greater injury to men.—Sins are farther aggravated when they are of such a nature that it is impossible for us to repair the injuries done by them, or make restitution for them. Thus nothing can compensate for our taking away the life of another; or for our casting a reproach on the holy ways of God, and thereby endeavouring to bring his gospel into contempt; or for our enticing others to sin, by which means we turn them aside from God, and endeavour to ruin their souls. Each of these is an injury which we cannot by any means repair; so that the crime is exceedingly aggravated.—Further, sin is aggravated if it be committed contrary to the very light of nature, such as would be offensive even to the heathen.^e—Again, sins receive aggravations when committed against means, mercies, and judgments; as when we break through all the fences which are set to prevent them; when the grace of God, revealed in the gospel, is not only ineffectual to preserve from sin, though designed for that end,^f but turned into lasciviousness;^g or when mercies are misimproved, undervalued, and, as it were, trampled on,^h and judgments, whether threatened or inflicted, are not regarded, or are unsuccessful in reclaiming us.—Sins are aggravated when they are committed against the checks and convictions of conscience; which is a judge and a reprover within our own breasts. To commit such sins is to offer violence to ourselves, and to make many bold advances towards judicial blindness, hardness of heart, and a total apostasy.—

^b 1 Thess. ii. 15.
^f Tit. ii. 11, 12.

^c Josh. vii. 20, 21, 25.
^g Jude, ver. 4.

^d Rom. i. 32.
^h Rom. ii. 4; Isa. i. 3; Deut. xxxii. 6.

^e 1 Cor. v. 1.

Moreover, sins are aggravated when they are committed against public or private admonitions, censures of the church or civil punishments, which are God's ordinance to bring men to repentance. If these means prove ineffectual to answer the designed end, the offenders will be left more stupid than they were before.—Sins are farther aggravated when they are contrary to our own prayers, vows, covenants, and promises made, either to God or men; when we confess any sins, or pretend to humble ourselves for them before God in prayer, and yet at other times indulge them, and are proud, self-conceited, and exalt ourselves against him; when we pray for strength against corruption, or for grace to perform holy duties, while, in reality, we have no love to these duties nor desire after them; when we praise him for mercies received, while we are habitually unthankful, and forgetful of his benefits; or when we are very forward to make vows, covenants of engagements to be the Lord's, whereby we often lay a snare for ourselves, from some circumstances which attended this action, and more especially from our disregarding it afterwards.—Again, sins are aggravated from the manner of our committing them. They are so if they are done deliberately, with forethought or contrivance; as when persons are said to devise mischief upon their beds, and then, as to their conduct, to set themselves against that which is good. A sin is aggravated if it be done wilfully, that is, with the full bent of the will, making it the matter of our choice, and resolving to commit it whatever it cost us. A sin is aggravated when we do it presumptuously, either when we take encouragement to do it from the grace of God,^k or when his hand is lifted up against us, or we see his judgments falling very heavy upon others, and are not disposed to take warning, but grow more hardened and stupid than before.—Further, when sin is committed maliciously, impudently, and obstinately, it argues a rooted hatred against God; or when it is committed with delight, arising either from the thoughts we entertain of it before we commit it, or the pleasure we afterwards take in what we have done; or when we boast of what we have done, which is to glory in our shame,^l—when we do, as it were, value ourselves for having got rid of the prejudices of education, and all former convictions of sin, that so we may go on in it with less disturbance; or when persons boast of their over-reaching others in their way of dealing in the world,^m which they very often do in their secret thoughts, though they are ashamed to let the world know how remote they are from the practice of that justice which ought to be between man and man.—Again, sins are aggravated when they are frequently committed, or when we relapse into the same sin, after having pretended to repent of it.ⁿ

Aggravations from the Circumstances of Time and Place.

IV. Sins are aggravated from circumstances of time and place; if on the Lord's-day, or other times of divine worship, or immediately before, or after these, or other helps, to prevent or remedy such miscarriages, if in public, or in the presence of others who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.

When a sin is committed by us on the Lord's-day, it is a profaning of that time which God has sanctified for his service, and so renders us guilty of a double crime. Or when sins are committed at any other time which we occasionally set apart for divine worship, or in those seasons when God calls for fasting and mourning, or at other times when we have lately received signal deliverances, either personal or national,^o they also are particularly aggravated. Or when they are committed immediately before or immediately after we have engaged in holy duties, they in the former case render us very unfit for them, and, in the latter, effectually take away all those impressions which have been made on our spirits while engaged in the duties.

Again, sins receive aggravations from the place in which they are committed. If, for example, they are committed in those places in which the name of God is more immediately called on, they will, if visible, afford great matter of scandal to some, and an ill example to others, and, if secretly committed, will tend to defile

i Psal. xxxvi. 4.

k Rom. vi. 1.

l Psal. x. 3; lii. 1.

m Prov. xx. 14.

n 2 Pet. ii. 20—22; Matt. xii. 43—45.

o Psal. cvi. 7.

our souls, and argue us guilty of great hypocrisy. Moreover, when we commit those sins which are generally abhorred in the places where providence has cast our lot, we render ourselves a stain and dishonour to those with whom we converse. Thus the prophet speaks of some who, 'in the land of uprightness,' will 'deal unjustly.'^p In particular, when we commit sins in the presence of persons who are likely to be provoked or defiled by them, we contract the guilt of other men's sins, as well as our own; and are doubly guilty, in being the cause, in many respects, of their transgressing.

There are several instances in which we may be said to contract the guilt of other men's sins. These I shall only mention briefly. When superiors lay their commands on inferiors, or oblige them, to do that which is in itself sinful; or, when we advise those who stand upon a level with us, to commit sin, or give our consent to the commission of it.^q—Again, when inferiors flatter superiors, or commend them for their sin. Thus, when Herod had courted the applause of the people, by the oration which he made to them, they, on the other hand, flattered him when they 'gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.'^r—Again, when we have recourse to those places where sin is usually committed, and desire to associate ourselves with those whose conversation is a reproach to religion;^s or when we are sharers or partakers with others in their unlawful gains, first encouraging, abetting, and helping them, and then dividing the spoil with them.^t—Again, when we connive at sin committed, or, if it be in our power, do not restrain or hinder the commission of it; or when we conceal it, when the farther progress of it might be prevented by our divulging it.—Again, when we provoke persons to sin, and so draw forth their corruptions; or when we extenuate sin, whether committed by ourselves or others, and so, in a degree, vindicate it, or plead for it; or lastly, when we do not mourn for or pray against those sins which are publicly committed in the world, and which are like to bring down national judgments.^u

THE DESERT OF SIN, AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE FROM IT.

QUESTION CLII. *What doth every sin deserve at the hands of God?*

ANSWER. Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come, and cannot be expiated, but by the blood of Christ.

QUESTION CLIII. *What doth God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law?*

ANSWER. That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation.

The Desert of Sin.

In the former of these Answers, we have an account of the demerit of sin; in the latter, we have the character and disposition of those who have ground to conclude that they shall be delivered from the wrath and curse of God due to it. We have already considered some sins as greater than others, by reason of several circumstances which tend to enhance the guilt of those who commit them. Yet there is no sin so small but it has this aggravation, that it is a violation of the law of God,

p Isa. xxvi. 10.

s Prov. xiii. 20.

q Acts vii. 58; Chap. vii. 1.

t Chap. i. 23—25.

r Chap. xii. 22.

u These several Heads, concerning the aggravations of sin, are contained in three or four lines, which are helpful to our memories. Most of the Heads of this Answer, are contained in that verse, *Quis? Quid? Ubi? Quibus auxiliis? Cur? Quomodo? Quando?* And those that relate to our contracting the guilt of other men's sins, in the following lines; *Jussu, Consilio, Consensu, Palpo, Recursu, Participans, Nutans, Non obstands, Non manifestans, Incessans, Minuens, Non mærens, Solicitansve.*

and is opposite to his holiness. Hence, it cannot but render the sinner guilty in his sight; and guilt is that whereby a person is liable to suffer punishment in proportion to the offence committed. It follows, then, that there is no ground for the distinction which the Papists make between mortal and venial sins. The former, they suppose, deserve the wrath and curse of God both in this and in another world; but as to the latter, namely, venial sins, they conclude that they may be atoned for by human satisfactions or penances, and that they are, in their own nature, so small that they do not deserve eternal punishment. This is an opinion highly derogatory to the glory of God, and opens a door to licentiousness, in a variety of instances; and the contrary to it is contained in the Answer we are now explaining.

Now, let it be considered that it is one thing for a sin to deserve the wrath and curse of God, and another thing for the sinner to be liable and exposed to it. The former arises from the heinous nature of sin, and is inseparable from it; the latter is inconsistent with a justified state. Nothing can take away the guilt of sin, but the atonement made by Christ, and that forgiveness or freedom from condemnation which God is pleased to bestow as the consequence of the atonement.^x It is this which discharges a believer from a liability to the wrath and curse of God. Though, as was observed under the last Answer, one sin is greater than another, by reason of various circumstances which attend it or are contained in it; yet the least sin must be concluded to be objectively infinite, as it is committed against a God of infinite perfection, and as all offences are great in proportion to the dignity of the person against whom they are committed. Thus the sin which is committed against an inferior or an equal, and deserves a less degree of punishment, if it be committed against a king, may be so circumstanced that it will be deemed a capital offence, and render the criminal guilty of high treason; though at the same time, no real injury is done to him, but only attempted against him. In like manner, we must conclude that, though it is out of our power to injure or detract from the essential glory of the great God, yet every offence committed against him is great in proportion to his infinite excellency, and is therefore said to deserve his wrath and curse. Wrath or anger, when affirmed of God, is not to be considered as a passion in him, as it is in men; but it denotes his will to punish sin committed, which takes its rise from the holiness of his nature, which is infinitely opposite to sin. Now the degree of punishment which he designs to inflict is stated in his law; and as that law denounces threatenings against those who violate it, the sinner is said to be exposed to its curse or condemning sentence, agreeably to the rules of justice, and the nature of the offence. This is what we are to understand, in this Answer, by sin deserving the wrath and curse of God.

The wrath and curse of God are farther considered as what extend to this life and that which is to come. Punishments inflicted in this life are but the beginning of miseries. Yet they are sometimes inexpressibly great; as the psalmist says, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.'^y Sometimes there is but a very short interval between the sin and the punishment; as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Korah and his company, Achan, and many others. At other times, however, it is long deferred; though it will fall with great weight, at last, on the offender. Thus God sometimes punishes the sins of youth in old age; and when a greater degree of guilt has been contracted, writes bitter things against them.^z But the greatest degree of punishment is reserved for sinners in another world; and is styled 'the wrath to come.'^a As these things, however, have been insisted on in some foregoing Answers,^b we shall say no more respecting them in this place.

The Way of Escape from the Desert of Sin.

We proceed now to notice what is farther observed, that this punishment cannot be expiated any otherwise than by the blood of Christ. This remark is fitly inserted after the account we have had of man's liability to the wrath of God by

^x Rom. viii. 1, 33.

^y Psal. xc. 11.

^z Job xiii. 26.

^a 1 Thess. i. 10.

^b See Quest. xxviii, xxix, and Quest. lxxxix.

reason of sin ; for when we have an afflicting sense of the guilt we have exposed ourselves to, nothing else will afford us relief. What we have to consider, then, is how our guilt may be removed, or by what means the justice of God may be satisfied, and an atonement made for sin. This is said to be done no other way but by the blood of Christ, as was considered under a foregoing Answer ; when we endeavoured to prove the necessity of Christ's making satisfaction, and the price which he paid in order to his making it.^c We also considered the fruits and effects of his satisfaction, as it has a tendency to remove the guilt of sin, and procure for us a right to eternal life.^d We shall therefore pass over the consideration of the subject in this place ; only we may observe, that, while our deliverance from guilt and punishment can be brought about by no other means than Christ's satisfaction, it is not inconsistent with what is contained in the following words, if rightly understood by us, to assert that God requires of us repentance, faith, and a diligent attendance on the outward means of grace ; though we must not conclude them to be the procuring cause of our justification, or a means to expiate sin. Those are certainly very much unacquainted with the way of salvation by Christ, as well as with the great defects of their repentance and faith, who suppose that God is induced by our repenting and believing to pardon our sins, or deliver us from the wrath we have deserved. Yet we are not to think that impenitent unbelieving sinners have a right to determine that they are in a justified state, or have ground to claim an interest in the benefits of Christ's redemption. The graces of faith and repentance are necessary to evince our interest in what he has done and suffered for us, and are inseparably connected with salvation ; though they do not give us a right and title to eternal life, as Christ's righteousness does. Under two foregoing Answers, we gave a particular account of repentance and faith. Concerning repentance, we observed that it is a special saving grace, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit ; and we showed in what way he works it, and what the difference is between legal and evangelical repentance, as the former is often found in those who are destitute of the latter. We also considered the various acts of repentance unto life ;^e what the objects and acts of saving faith are ; how it differs from that which is not so ; the use of it in the whole conduct of our lives ; and how it gives life and vigour to all other graces, and enables us to perform duties in a right manner.^f We shall not, therefore, insist on this subject at present ; but only speak of repentance and faith as means appointed by God, in order to our attaining complete salvation.

The means conducive to salvation are either internal or external. The former are inseparably connected with salvation ; so that none who repent and believe shall perish.^g The graces of faith and repentance, together with all others which accompany or flow from them, are the fruits and effects of Christ's mediation ; and hence are sometimes called saving graces. As they are wrought in the hearts of believers, and have a reference to salvation, they may be truly styled internal means of salvation ; and, as such, they are distinguished from those outward and ordinary means of grace by which God is pleased to work them. The latter are the ordinances ; which we are diligently to attend on, in hopes of obtaining these graces under them, till God is pleased to give success to our endeavours, and work grace in our use of them ; and the efficacy of them is wholly owing to his power and is to be resolved into his sovereign will. This may be fitly illustrated by what is said concerning the poor impotent, blind, halt, and withered persons, waiting at the pool of Bethesda, for the angel's troubling the water ; after which, he who first stepped in, was made whole.^h We do not find that every one who waited there embraced the first opportunity, and received a cure ; for some were obliged to wait many years, and if they were made whole at last, they had no reason to think their labour lost. This may be applied to those who have the means of grace. Many sit under them who receive no saving advantage, till God is pleased, in his accepted time, to work those graces which render the ordinances effectual to salvation. The blessed success attending them is from God. He could, indeed, save his people without them, as he converted Paul, when going to

^c See Quest. xlv. ^d See Quest. lxx, lxxi, and what was said under those Answers to explain the doctrine of justification.

^f See Quest. lxxii, lxxiii.

^e See Quest. lxxvi.

^g John iii. 16.

^h John v. 2—4.

Damascus, with a design to persecute the church there, and when not only unacquainted with the means of grace, but prejudiced against them. But this is not God's ordinary method. He has put an honour on his own institutions, so as to render it necessary for us to pray, wait, and hope for saving blessings, in attending on them. Thus, when he promises to 'put his Spirit' within his people, and 'cause them to walk in his statutes,' he adds, 'Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'ⁱ Accordingly, we are commanded to 'seek the Lord whilst he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.'^k By our attendance on his ordinances, we testify our approbation of that method which he has ordained for the application of redemption; and by our perseverance in it, determining not to leave off waiting till we have obtained the blessing expected, we proclaim the valuableness of that method, and subscribe to the sovereignty of God in dispensing those blessings to his people which they stand in need of, as well as pray and hope for them in his own time and way. Thus we are to wait on the means of grace.

It is farther observed, that we are to wait on the means of grace with diligence, and not in a careless and indifferent manner, as though we neither expected nor desired much advantage from them. This implies an embracing of every opportunity, and an observing of those special seasons in which God is pleased, in his gospel, to hold forth the golden sceptre of grace; as also our having earnest desires and raised expectations of obtaining that grace from him which he encourages us to wait and hope for. We are thus led to speak particularly concerning these outward means, as stated in the following Answer

THE ORDINANCES.

QUESTION CLIV. *What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?*

ANSWER. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation.

The Import of the Ordinances.

In explaining this Answer, we shall first consider what we are to understand by the ordinances; which are here styled outward and ordinary means of grace. The first idea contained in them, is that they are religious duties, prescribed by God, as an instituted method in which he will be worshipped by his creatures. But what more especially denominates them ordinances, is the promise which he has annexed to them of his special presence, and the encouragement which he has given to his people in attending on them, to hope for those blessings which accompany salvation. As God works grace by and under them, they are called means of grace; as he seldom works grace without first inclining persons to attend on him in them, and wait for his salvation, they are called the ordinary means of grace; and as they have not in themselves a tendency to work grace, without the inward and powerful influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying them, they are distinguished from it, and accordingly styled the outward means of grace.

1. Now, the ordinances, as thus described, must be engaged in according to a divine appointment. No creature has a warrant to enjoin any modes of worship, pretending that these will be acceptable or well-pleasing to God; since God alone, who is the object of worship, has a right to prescribe the way in which he will be worshipped. For a creature to institute modes of worship would be an instance of profaneness and bold presumption; and the worship performed would be 'in vain;' as our Saviour says concerning that which has no higher sanction than 'the commandments of men.'^l Whatever pretence of religion there may be, God looks

ⁱ Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 37.

^k Isa. lv. 6.

^l Matt. xv. 9.

upon such worshippers as well as those whose prescriptions they follow, with the utmost contempt, and will punish rather than encourage them. Thus the prophet reproves Israel for being guilty of defection from God, in engaging in that worship which he had not ordained, when he says, 'The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and ye walk in their counsels that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing. Therefore shall ye bear the reproach of my people.'^m And Jeroboam is often branded with having 'made Israel to sin,' for instituting ordinances of divine worship, and 'setting up calves in Dan and Bethel, making an house of high places, and priests of the lowest of the people,' and appointing sacred times in which they should perform this worship; all which were of his own devising, and became a snare to the people.ⁿ It is certain, that such appointments cannot be reckoned means of grace, or pledges of God's presence; and it would redound to his dishonour, should he be obliged to communicate the benefits of Christ's redemption by means of them, to any who, under a pretence of worshipping him in a way of their own devising, offer the highest affront to him.

2. If God is pleased to reveal his will concerning the way in which we are to worship him and to hope for his presence, it is our indispensable duty to comply with it, to implore his acceptance of us in it, and to be importunate with him that he would put a glory on his own institutions, and grant us his special presence and grace, that we may be enabled to perform whatever duty he enjoins, in such a manner that the most valuable ends may be answered, and our spiritual edification and salvation promoted.

3. Though we consider the ordinances as instituted means of grace, yet a mere attendance on them will not of itself confer grace. This is very evident from the declining state of religion, in those who engage in the external part of it, and attend upon all the ordinances of God's appointment, and yet remain destitute of saving grace; who are stupid under the awakening calls of the gospel, and regard not its invitations to adhere steadfastly to Jesus Christ, whom in words they profess to own, though in works they deny him. The case of these persons is a convincing evidence, that it is God alone, who, having appointed these ordinances, can make them effectual to salvation. Thus concerning the nature of an ordinance, and in what respects it may be called an outward and ordinary means of grace.

Classification of the Ordinances.

We are now to consider what are these ordinances by which Christ communicates the benefits of his mediation.

1. They are such as are engaged in by particular persons, in subserviency to their spiritual welfare, in order to the beginning or carrying on of the work of grace in their souls; such as meditation about divine subjects, self-examination, and all other duties which are performed by them in their private retirement, in hope of having communion with God.

2. There are other ordinances which God has given to worshipping assemblies, which are founded on that general promise, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.'^o Those mentioned in this Answer, are the word, sacraments, and prayer. Of these the sacraments are particularly given to the churches; the word and prayer, to all who are favoured with the gospel-dispensation. To these we may add, singing the praises of God; which, though it is not particularly mentioned in this Answer, is a duty in which we may expect to meet with his presence and blessing; and, accordingly, is an ordinance which God makes effectual to promote our salvation.

The Ordinance of Praise.

Before we enter on the consideration of the following Answers, we shall say

^m Micah vi. 16.

ⁿ 1 Kings xii. 30, 31.

^o Exod. xx. 24.

something concerning this duty, of singing the praises of God, as an ordinance which he has instituted ; together with the manner in which it is to be performed.

1. We may inquire what ground we have to reckon it among the ordinances of God. That it is a divine ordinance must not be taken for granted, but proved ; because there are many who deny it to be so. That it was an ordinance enjoined to and practised by the church under the Old Testament dispensation, appears from the many songs and psalms given, by divine inspiration, to be used by them in their solemn acts of worship. Not only were some of these sung by particular persons, but the whole church is represented as joining in them with united voices. Thus when Pharaoh's host was drowned in the Red sea, it is said, 'Moses and the children of Israel sang' the song which was given by divine inspiration for that purpose.^p And when Moses was inspired with the song recorded in Deut. xxxii., he was commanded to 'write it for them, and teach it to them, and put it in their mouths,'^q that they might sing it in their public worship ; which he accordingly did.^r And from the days of David, when public worship was more settled than it had been before, and many things relating to the order, beauty, and harmony of it, brought into the church by divine direction, there was an order of men called singers who were to preside over and set forward this work. There was also a book of psalms given by divine inspiration for the use of the church, that they might not be at a loss as to the matter of praise in this ordinance. That the psalms were given them to be publicly sung may be inferred from the style of them, the words being often put in the plural number ; which argues that they were to be sung, not by one person in the church, but by the whole congregation in their solemn and public acts of worship. Accordingly, we often find the whole multitude exhorted to sing the praises of God. Thus it is said, 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness ;'^s and 'Sing aloud unto God our strength ; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, &c. for this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.'^t Sometimes also the church are represented as exciting one another to this duty. Thus it is said, 'O come, let us sing unto the Lord ; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.'^u It may be observed, too, that how much soever the use of musical instruments in this worship may be concluded to have been particularly adapted to that dispensation, as it was typical of that spiritual joy which the gospel church should obtain by Christ ; yet the ordinance of singing remains a duty, as founded on the moral law. Accordingly, we find that the practice of it was recommended, not only to the Jews, but to all nations. Thus it is said, 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth.'^x The psalmist speaks to the same purpose, when he presses this duty upon 'all lands,' whom he exhorts to 'serve God with gladness ; and to come before the Lord with singing.'^y Besides, it seems to be preferred before some other parts of worship, which were merely ceremonial. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will praise the name of God with a song. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock ;'^z that is, God is more glorified hereby than he is by the external rites of ceremonial worship, especially when abstracted from those acts of faith which add an excellency and glory to them.

We are thus led to consider the singing of praises to God as an ordinance practised by the New Testament church. Some had songs given to them by inspiration ; as the Virgin Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon.^a Sometimes also the members of particular churches had a psalm given in by extraordinary revelation ;^b and we can hardly suppose this to have been without a design that it should be sung in the church for their edification,—especially considering it as an extraordinary dispensation of the Spirit. And, as the singing of a psalm in the church is an act of public worship, it is reasonable to suppose that the whole assembly joined in it ; so that this ordinance was not only practised by them, but had also a divine sanction,

p Contained in Exod. xv.

s Psal. xxx. 4.

x Psal. xcvi. 4.

a Luke i. 46, 47, et seq : Chap. ii. 28, et seq.

q Deut. xxxi.

t Psal. lxxx. 1, 2, 3, 4.

y Psal. c. 1, 2.

r Verse 22.

u Psal. xcvi. 1, 2.

z Psal. lxix. 30, 31.

b 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

in the Spirit being the author of the psalm which was sung. Moreover, we sometimes read of the church singing an hymn, which was no other than a psalm or spiritual song, at the Lord's supper. Thus our Saviour, at the close of that ordinance, sung an hymn with his disciples,—that small church with whom he then communicated.^c At another time, when he was 'come nigh to the descent of the mount of Olives,' it is said that 'the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice.'^d Here, by 'the multitude of the disciples,' we must understand all who followed him, and had a conviction in their consciences that he was the Messiah, from the miracles which they had seen him work. And we have an account of the short hymn which they sang: 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.'^e This was not, indeed, sung in a church-assembly; yet it was sung with 'a loud voice,' and in singing it they gave glory to God. And though some of the Pharisees were offended at it,^f yet our Saviour, in the following words, vindicates their practice: and his doing so argues that it was a branch of religious worship performed by them at that time, and a duty approved of by him. All that I would infer is, that as our Saviour gave countenance to the singing of the praises of God with united voices, it follows that we ought, on all occasions, to do the same thing, and consequently, that singing is an ordinance whereby the church ought to glorify God, and show forth his praise. Thus we have considered singing to be an ordinance, or a branch of instituted worship.

2. There are several things in which this ordinance agrees with some others; particularly with prayer in all the parts of it, and with the reading and preaching of the word. That it has something in common with prayer, appears from the subject of several of the psalms of David. Some of these are called prayers; and accordingly contain several petitions for blessings that the church stood in need of, together with various confessions of sin, as well as thanksgiving for mercies received. As to the agreement of this ordinance with the preaching or reading of the word, that, I think, may be inferred in general from one of the ends of it mentioned by the apostle, namely, 'teaching and admonishing one another.'^g Singing the praises of God is what the psalmist styles, 'talking of all his wondrous works.'^h The church also are said to 'speak to themselves,' or to 'one another' in this duty.ⁱ Moreover, in some of the psalms the psalmist is represented as speaking to the church, and they as making their reply to him. Thus he advises them to 'lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord';^k and they answer him, 'The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.'^l The same thing may be observed in many other psalms, in which there is a frequent change of the person speaking. Indeed, the entire book contains many admonitions or cautions necessary to be observed by others, which they who sing direct and apply to each other. Again, in singing the praises of God, we take notice of or celebrate the dispensations of his providence, either in a way of judgment or of mercy; and of this we have many instances in the book of psalms, as is very evident in all those which are properly historical.

3. We must, notwithstanding, suppose singing to be a distinct ordinance from preaching, prayer, or reading the word; for it is mentioned in scripture as such. What it principally differs in, is that it is designed to raise the affections; and it is certain that the modulation or tone of the voice has often a tendency to do so. And because the performing of religious worship with raised affections, is a great duty and privilege; God has appointed singing as an ordinance in some degree conducive to answer that end.

It is objected that, if the tone of the voice be reckoned an ordinance to raise the affections, vocal or instrumental music may be deemed sufficient, without making use of those words in singing which God has ordained, and in the use of which singing becomes a religious duty. We reply, that to have the affections raised, is no branch of religion, unless they are excited by those ideas of divine things in which it principally consists. That which is a means of raising the affections, may

c Mark xiv. 26.
h Psal. cv. 1, 2

d Luke xix. 37.
i Eph. v. 19.

e Verse 38.

k Psal. cxxxiv. 2.

f Verse 39.

g Col. iii. 16.
l Verse 3.

not have a tendency to excite religious affections. Hence, it is not merely singing, but celebrating the praises of God in it with raised affections, which is the duty and ordinance we ought to engage in. These two, then, must be connected together, and if God is pleased, not only to instruct us as to the matter about which our faith is to be conversant, but to give us an ordinance conducive to the exciting of our affections, it must be reckoned an additional advantage, and a help to our praising him in a becoming manner.

It is farther objected that those arguments which have been taken from the practice of the Old Testament church, to prove singing an ordinance, may, with equal justice, be alleged to prove the use of instrumental music in religious worship; since we very often read of their praising God with 'the sound of the trumpet, psaltery, harp, organ,' and other musical instruments.^m This is the principal argument brought for the use of musical instruments by those who defend it and conclude it an help to devotion. But, though we often read of music being used in singing the praises of God under the Old Testament; yet if what has been said concerning its being a type of that spiritual joy which attends our praising God for the privilege of that redemption which Christ has purchased, the objection will appear to have no weight, the type being now abolished, together with the ceremonial law. Besides, though we read of the use of music in the temple-service, yet it does not sufficiently appear that it was ever used in the Jewish synagogues; the mode of worship observed in which more resembled that which is at present performed by us in our public assemblies. But what may sufficiently determine this matter, is that we have no precept nor precedent for it in the New Testament, either from the practice of Christ, or his apostles. Some, indeed, allege that the absence of any such precept or precedent overthrows the ordinance of singing, and pretend that this ought to be no more used by us than the harp, organ, or other musical instruments. But it might as well be objected that, because incense, which was used under the ceremonial law, together with prayer in the temple,ⁿ is not now to be offered by us, prayer ought to be laid aside; which is, as all own, a duty founded on the moral law.

4. In singing those psalms or songs which are given by divine inspiration, we are not to consider the subject of them as always expressive of the frame of our own spirits, or as denoting the dispensations of providence which we or the church of God are at present exercised with. This is necessary in order to our singing with understanding; and it may be inferred from what we have said concerning the agreement which there is between singing and reading any of David's psalms. It must be allowed by all, that we ought to have the same acts of faith in the one, as we have in the other. This is evident from all compositions in prose or verse, whether divine or human. If the subject be historical, whatever the form be in which it is laid down, the principal things to be considered are the matters of fact which are related. If an history be written in prose, and the same should be turned into verse, though its being laid down in the form of a poem adds something of beauty to the mode of expression, yet the ideas which are conveyed, or the historical representation of things, are the same as if they had not been written in verse. The reading of the history in verse may perhaps add something of pleasure and delight to our ideas, just as singing, though the same in matter as respects the exciting of the affections, is a distinct ordinance from reading; yet the circumstance of the history being in verse does not give us different ideas of the matter narrated; and much less are we to take occasion thence to apply those things to ourselves which are spoken of others, unless parallel circumstances required us to do so. If this rule be not observed, I do not see how we can sing many of the psalms of David. Sometimes the subject of them is not agreeable to every age of life, or to the universal experience of particular persons. It would be very preposterous for a child, in singing those words, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread,'^o or what is elsewhere said, 'Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not,'^p to apply them in particular to himself. And when some other psalms are sung in a public assembly,

Psal. cl. 3—5.

n Luke i. 9, 10.

o Psal. xxxvii. 25.

p Psal. lxxi. 18.

in which God's people are represented as dejected, disconsolate, and, as it were, sinking in the depths of despair, as when it is said, 'My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;'^q 'I am counted with them that go down into the pit. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted,'^r they cannot be applied to every particular person in a worshipping assembly, as denoting that frame of spirit in which he is at present. Those expressions also which we meet with elsewhere, which speak of a believer as having full assurance of God's love to him, and of his right and title to eternal life, as when it is said, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,'^s cannot be applied to those who are in a dejected, despairing, or unbelieving frame of spirit. Moreover, those psalms which contain an historical account of some particular dispensations of providence towards the church of old, cannot be applied to it in every age, or to the circumstances of every believer. When it is said, for example, 'By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Sion,'^t the words are not to be considered as expressive of our own case when we in the present day sing them. Or, when, on the other hand, the church is represented as praising God for particular deliverances,^u or expressing its triumphs in the victories obtained over its enemies,^x the words are not to be applied by particular persons, to themselves, especially at all times. Again, when the psalmist makes use of those phrases which are adapted to the ceremonial law, as when he speaks of 'binding the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar,'^y or of 'offering bullocks upon it;'^z the language cannot be taken in a literal sense, when applied to the gospel-state. And when we are exhorted to 'praise God with the psaltery,'^a &c., we are to express those acts of faith which are agreeable to the gospel-dispensation. The general rule, indeed, which is applicable to all psalms of a similar nature, is that with the same frame of spirit with which we read them, we ought to sing them. Sometimes we are to consider them as containing an account of those providences to which we are liable, rather than those which we are at present under; or of what we desire or fear, rather than of what we experience; and we are to improve them so as to excite those graces which ought to be exercised in like circumstances, when it shall please God to bring us under them. With this frame of spirit, the psalms of David are to be sung as well as read; otherwise we shall be obliged to exclude several of them as not fit to be used in gospel-worship. I would, however, assert nothing which should give the least countenance to any of them not being sung; just as I would not affirm that they are not to be read in public assemblies.

To what has been said concerning our using David's psalms in singing the praises of God, it is objected that some of them contain such imprecations or desires that God would destroy his enemies,^b as are inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, or with that love which it obliges us to express towards our enemies, agreeably to the command and practice of the holy Jesus.^c Now, before I proceed to a direct answer to this objection, it may be observed that it is generally alleged by the Deists with a design to cast a reproach on divine revelation. They hence take occasion outrageously to inveigh against David, as though he were of a malicious and implacable spirit. Indeed, they will hardly allow him to have been a good man; for the imprecations which occur in his psalms of the wrath of God on the church's enemies, are reckoned by them no other than the effects of his passion and hatred of them. Hence, say they, it is a preposterous thing to suppose that his psalms were given by divine inspiration. There are others, however, namely, some among the Socinians, who give a different turn to such expressions; and pretend that, under the Old Testament dispensation, it was not unlawful for persons to hate their enemies, or curse them, or imprecate the wrath of God upon them; though our Saviour thought fit, under the New Testament dispensation, to command what was directly contrary. That the hating of enemies was formerly

q Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3.

u As in Psal. cvii.

a Psal. cl.

Luke xxiii. 34.

r Psal. lxxxviii. 4, 7, 15.

x As in Psal. cxlix.

b Psal. lv. 15; lix. 13—15; lxix. 22—25, 27, 28.

s Psal. lxxiii. 24.

y Psal. cxviii. 27.

t Psal. cxxxvii. 1.

z Psal. li. 19.

c Matt. v. 44, 45;

lawful, they argue from what is said in Matt. v. 43, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;' while the new commandment which Christ substituted in the room of this, is contained in the following words, in which he obliges us to 'love our enemies,' &c. But this interpretation gives a grossly mistaken view of that scripture which speaks of 'hating enemies;' for our Saviour, in mentioning it, does not design to refer to any thing said in the Old Testament, but only to expose the corrupt gloss of the scribes and Pharisees, given on some passages. We must conclude, therefore, that it was as unlawful to hate enemies before, as it is now under the gospel-dispensation. These things I could not but premise, before we came to a direct answer to the objection which we have stated.

Now, if what is alleged in that objection were true, it would certainly be unlawful to sing David's psalms; and, at the same time, it would be a very difficult matter to substitute any hymns and songs in their room, which would be altogether unexceptionable; and then the ordinance of singing would be effectually overthrown. We observe, however, that the words having been spoken by David, under divine inspiration, some of the scriptures referred to may, agreeably to the rules of grammar, be understood as a prediction of those judgments which God would execute on his implacable enemies. This is especially the case if the word which is supposed in the objection to contain the form of an imprecation, is put in the future tense as it often is; and if it be put in the imperative mood, as in other places in which it is said, 'Let death seize on them; let them go down quick into hell; let them be blotted out of the book of the living,' the mode of speaking, especially when applied to God, contains an intimation of what he would do, or of the wrath which he would pour forth, as a punishment of sin committed, persisted in, and not repented of. Indeed, in one of these psalms, namely, the sixty-ninth, in which the righteous judgments of God are denounced against sinners, the psalmist plainly speaks in the person of our Saviour, to whom the ninth and twenty-first verses are expressly applied in the New Testament.^d Hence, when he says, in the twenty-second verse, 'Let their table become a snare,' the meaning is, that God would deny some of his furious and implacable enemies that grace which alone could prevent their waxing worse and worse under outward prosperity. When he says, in the twenty-third verse, 'Let their eyes be darkened,' the meaning is, they shall be given up to judicial blindness, as the Jews were; the providence of God permitting, though not effecting it. When it is said, in the twenty-fourth verse, 'Pour out thine indignation upon them,' the words are an intimation that this judicial blindness should come upon them. When he adds, in the twenty-fifth verse, 'Let their habitation be desolate,' the meaning is, that the land in which they dwelt should be destitute of its former inhabitants; and so the words contain a prediction of the desolate state of the Jewish nation, after they were destroyed and driven out of their country by the Romans. When he farther says, 'Add iniquity to their iniquity,' his words, as was observed elsewhere, may be explained consistently with the divine perfections;^e so that the sense of them is not liable to any just exception. I have made these observations on this psalm, only to show that it is not necessary to suppose that these imprecations are always to be understood as what will warrant or give countenance to private persons to wish or pray for the destruction of their enemies. Moreover, if the evil denounced be of a temporal nature, as when the psalmist is represented as desiring that his enemies may be 'consumed as the stubble before the wind,' or as 'the wood that the fire burneth';^f the desires are not those of one who meditates private revenge, or wishes to see the ruin of persons whom he hates. But they are the sentiments of the church of God in general, as acquiescing in his righteous judgments, which should be poured forth on those that hate him and persecute his people. Now, if either the church must be ruined, or those who set themselves against it removed out of the way, they cannot but desire the latter rather than the former. If such expressions be thus understood, there will be no sufficient reason for the exception which is taken against the

^d John ii. 17; Matt. xxvii. 34.
under Quest. xii, xiii.

^e See Sect. 'The Doctrine of Reprobation,
^f Psal. lxxxiii. 13, 14.

book of the psalms ; nor will any one have just occasion to lay aside a part of them, as what cannot be sung by a Christian congregation.

It is farther objected, that if singing could be proved to be an ordinance to be used by particular persons, it will not follow that the whole congregation ought to join their voices together. It is sufficient, say the objectors, if one person sing, and others make melody in their hearts. United voices in singing will occasion confusion in the worship of God ; and, when a mixed multitude join in it, it can hardly be supposed that they all sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. Hence, if one should sing, it is sufficient for those who are qualified to join in this ordinance, to say, Amen, or to have their hearts engaged as they have who join in public prayer, in which one is the mouth of the whole assembly. We reply, that to insinuate that singing with united voices is confusion, is to cast a great reproach on that worship which we often read of in scripture, which was performed in this manner. Thus Moses and the children of Israel sang the praises of God on occasion of their deliverance from the Egyptians ;^g and their doing so was certainly an act of public worship, not performed by Moses alone, but by the whole congregation. In the New Testament, too, there is a very remarkable example of singing with united voices, our Saviour himself being present.^h It is said that he and his disciples ‘sang an hymn.’ The word is in the plural number ;ⁱ so that they all joined with their voices in singing. Some observe, also, that it is not without design that it is said, ‘He,’ that is, Christ, ‘blessed the bread,’ and ‘He gave thanks ;’^k they joining with him in this act only in their hearts, as the congregation joins with the minister who is their mouth in public prayer. But when the evangelist speaks of the ordinance of singing, he represents them as all joining with their voices. Accordingly, the word, as was just now observed, is in the plural number.^l

Another part of the objection respects the congregation’s joining in the heart, with one who sings with the voice, in like manner as we do in prayer. Now, though he who joins in heart with another who prays, may be said to perform the duty of prayer, though he does not express his desires with his own voice ; yet joining with the heart, while only one sings, cannot, properly speaking, be called singing, much less ‘singing with the voice,’ or ‘singing with a loud voice,’ as it is often expressed in scripture. The apostle, indeed, speaks of ‘singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.’^m This language, in some measure, seems to favour the objection ; and it is inferred from it, that, if one sings with the voice, others may make melody in the heart. But I understand it otherwise. The apostle, as I think, is pressing the church to sing, that is, to make melody to the Lord ; and is showing that, in order to this ordinance being performed in a right manner, the heart ought to go along with the voice. He thus intimates that there ought not only to be a melodious sound, by which the praises of God are sung, but together with this, suitable acts of faith ought to be put forth, whereby we worship him with our hearts, as well as our voices. What he says, therefore, does not prove that the melody spoken of respects only the frame of spirit, exclusive of the use of the voice in singing.

Another part of the objection is that, when a mixed multitude sing, some must be supposed to want two necessary qualifications for singing, namely, the Spirit and the understanding ; and that their singing, while they want these, is to join in the external ordinance, while there is no harmony as to the internal frame of spirit, or the exercise of faith, which alone makes it pleasing to God. We reply, that a mixed multitude may join together in prayer, and that the word of God, and particularly the psalms of David, may be read in the public congregation. Now, though there are, perhaps, many present who do not understand the meaning of every particular phrase used in the psalms of David, it does not follow that these psalms ought not to be sung by us. We have already observed that there is no essential difference, especially as to what concerns the frame of our spirit, between singing and reading. It follows, then, that whatever psalm may be read may be sung. He who is not qualified to do the latter, is not qualified to do the former. The apostle, indeed,

g Exod. xvi. 1.
k Matt. xxvi. 26, 27.

h Mark xiv. 26.
l Verse 30.

i *ᾠδοῦντες*.
m Eph. v. 19.

speaks of his 'praying and singing with the Spirit,' as well as 'with the understanding;' but the meaning is, that we ought to desire the efficacious influences of the Spirit, and press after the knowledge of the meaning of the words we use, either in prayer or singing. Yet the defect of our understanding, or our having a less degree of it than others, or than we ought to have, does not exempt us from a right to engage in this ordinance. Hence, we are not to refuse to join with those in singing the praises of God, whom we would not exclude from our society, if we were reading any of the psalms of David in public.

5. We are now to consider the matter to be sung. There are very few who allow singing to be an ordinance, who will deny it to be our duty to sing the psalms of David, and other spiritual songs which we frequently meet with in scripture. Some, indeed, have contested the expediency of a Christian assembly making use of several Old Testament phrases which are contained in these. Others have alleged that the phrases ought to be altered in many instances, especially in those which have a peculiar reference to the psalmist's personal circumstances, and others substituted for them to express matter of universal experience. But, if what has been said under the last Head be true, this argument will appear to have little weight; inasmuch as all the arguments which are brought in defence of making these alterations in the psalms as they are to be sung by us, will hold equally good as applicable to the ordinance of reading them, and, it may be, will as much evince the necessity of altering the phrases of scripture in several other parts as well as in these. For if some psalms are not to be sung by a Christian assembly in the words in which they were at first delivered, and consequently are not to be read by them, because the phraseology is not agreeable to the state of the Christian church, and needs to be altered when applied to our present use; the same may be said concerning other parts of scripture; and then the word of God, as it was at first given to us, is no more to be read than to be sung by us. As to the objection that it is inexpedient for us to make use of those words, and apply them to our case in our devotions, which David used in his with a peculiar view to his own condition, what was said under the fourth Head relating to the frame of spirit with which the psalms are to be sung, will very much weaken the force of it. The consideration stated there is what, in a great measure, determines my sentiments as to the ordinance of conjoint singing, as well as the matter of it; for I am well persuaded that if the words were to be considered as our own, as they ought to be when joining with another who is our mouth to God in prayer, there are very few psalms or hymns of human composition which can be sung by a mixed assembly. But as a divine veneration ought to be paid to the psalms, and they are to be read with those acts of faith which are the main ingredients in our devotions, we are to sing them with the same view, only with this difference that we are to make use of the tone of the voice as a farther help to the raising of our affections.

The next thing to be considered, is what version of the psalms is to have the preference in our esteem, as subservient to the design of this ordinance. It is not my business, under this Head, to criticise the various versions of the psalms. Nor can it be supposed that I have a regard to those poetical beauties in which one version excels another; for then I should be inclined to think some of those which I do not choose to make use of in the ordinance of singing, much preferable to others, for the exactness of their style and composition. But when I am to sing the praises of God, in the words of David or any other inspired writer, or as nearly **as** possible in their words, what I principally regard is the agreeableness of the version to the original; and then the psalms may be sung with the same frame of spirit with which they are to be read, and I am not obliged, in singing, to consider the words as expressive of my own frame of spirit, any more than I am in reading them. But if the composition cannot properly be called a version, but is an imitation of David's psalms, then I make use of it in the ordinance of singing, with the same view as I would an hymn; but of this more shall be said hereafter. Now the versions which, I think, come nearest to the original are the New England and the Scotch.ⁿ The

ⁿ There is a version of psalms, printed by the late Dr. Mather, in blank verse, which I once had the sight of, but am not capable of passing a judgment on it, only, that it was very near the original; but whether in other respects it was preferable to these two other versions, I know not.

latter, however, I think much preferable to the former ; inasmuch as the sentences are not so transposed as in the other, and the lines are much more smooth and pleasant to be read. I should be very glad to see a version more perfect, which comes as near the sense of the original, and excels it in the beauty or elegance of its style. And it would be a very great advantage if some marginal notes were added, as a comment upon it ; which would be an help to our right understanding of it.

I shall now give my thoughts concerning the singing of hymns. These, according to the common acceptance of the word, are distinguished from psalms,—and they generally denote an human composition, fitted for singing, the matter of which contains some divine subjects in the words agreeable to or deduced from scripture. The argument which is generally brought in defence of them is this:—Though scripture is a rule of faith whence all the knowledge of divine things is primarily deduced, and therefore has the preference, as to its excellency and authority, to any other composition ; yet it is not only lawful but necessary to express our faith in the doctrines which it contains in other words than its own, as we do in prayer or preaching. Now if it be a duty to praise God with the voice, it is not unlawful to praise him in words agreeable to scripture, as well as in the express words of it. Hence both may be proved to be a duty, namely, praising God in the words of David, and by other songs contained in scripture, and praising him in words agreeable to scripture, though of human composition. This is the best reasoning which I have met with in defence of the lawfulness of singing hymns, not as opposed to or excluding David's psalms, but as used occasionally, as providence directs us ; that so our acknowledgments of benefits received may be insisted on with greater enlargement than they are in the book of psalms. For though there may be in that book something adapted to every case, yet the particular occasion of our praise is not so largely contained in the same section or paragraph ; and therefore a hymn may be composed adapted to each occasion, in order to our praising God. But when, on the other hand, persons seem to prefer hymns to David's psalms, and substitute them for the latter, I cannot but disapprove of their practice. A late writer^o speaks on this subject with a great deal of moderation. Though he proves that scripture psalms should be preferred before all others, and more ordinarily sung ; yet he thinks that hymns of human composition ought not wholly to be excluded, provided they be exactly agreeable to, and as much as may be, the words of holy scripture. There are other writers to whom I pay equal deference, who have concisely, though with a considerable degree of judgment, proved singing to be a gospel ordinance,^p who argue against singing of hymns. Indeed, what they say in opposition to those who defend the practice from Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16, and allege that 'hymns' are distinct from 'psalms and spiritual songs,' and that we are to understand by them human compositions agreeable to scripture, as by psalms and spiritual songs we are to understand those which are contained in the very words of scripture, seems very just. What they say corresponds with the opinion of several judicious and learned men, who assert that these three words signify nothing else but those psalms or songs which are contained in scripture.^q The question in debate with me, is not whether the psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs which are contained in scripture, are designed to be a directory for gospel-worship,—for that, I think, all ought to allow ; but, whether it be lawful to sing a human composition which is agreeable to scripture, either as to its words or

^o See Mr. Richard Allein's Essay on singing, chap. iv. who seems, in my opinion, in the whole of his short performance, to argue with a considerable degree of candour and judgment.

^p See Sidenham's Gospel-ordinance concerning singing, &c. and Hitchin's Scripture proof for singing, &c.

^q It cannot well be denied that the psalms of David are called indifferently by these three names, 'Psalms,' 'Hymns,' and 'Songs,' מִזְמֹרֹת, תְּהִלָּה, פְּסַלְמוֹת, ὕμνη, ᾠδή; and sometimes the same psalm is called a Song or Psalm, as in the title of Psalm lxxv. or a Song of a Psalm [as the LXX. render it, ᾠδὴ ψαλμοῦ]. And in Psalm cv. 2. when it is said, 'Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him;' שִׁיר לְיְיָ the former word signifies to sing a spiritual song ; the latter to sign a psalm ; or, as the Septuagint render the same word, in 1 Chron. xvi. 9, a Hymn. [ᾠδαὶ καὶ ὕμνησας.] See Sidenham's Gospel-ordinance, &c. chap. ii. and Ainsworth on the title of Psalm iii. whom he there refers to.

its sense,—especially when the subject of our praise is not laid down so largely in one particular section of scripture, as we desire to express it. In this case, if we were to connect several parts of scripture together, so that the design of enlarging on a particular subject might be answered, there would be less necessity to compose a hymn in other words. But as the occasions of praise are very large and extensive, and as it may be thought expedient to adore the divine perfections in our own words in singing, just as we do in prayer, considering the one to be a moral duty as well as the other; I will not pretend to maintain the unlawfulness of singing hymns of human composition, though some of much superior learning and judgment have done so. I would, however, always pay the greatest deference to those divine compositions which are given as the principal rule for our procedure in praise. Yet I cannot but express my dislike of several hymns which I have often heard sung. In some of these the heads of the sermon have been comprised; and others are so very mean and injudicious, and, it may be, in some respects, so unaccordant with the analogy of faith, that I cannot, in the least, approve of them. But if we have ground to conclude the composition, as to the matter and the mode of expression, unexceptionable, and adapted to raise the affections, as well as excite suitable acts of faith in extolling the praise of God, it gives me no more disgust, though it be not in scripture-words, than praying or preaching does when the matter is scriptural. Yet as, when we confess sin, acknowledge mercies received, or desire those blessings which are suited to our case, we always suppose that the words which he who is the mouth of the congregation uses, ought to be such as all can join with him in, and in this, the reading of one of David's prayers, and the putting up of a prayer in the congregation, differ as to a very considerable circumstance; so the same ought to be observed in hymns. But, if an hymn be so composed that all who sing it are represented as signifying their having experienced those things which belong not to them, or as blessing God for what they never received; the use of it, I conceive, would be as unwarrantable a method of singing hymns of human composition as if the expressions were used in public prayer. There are, indeed, many hymns which have a great vein of piety and devotion, but are not adapted to the experience of the whole assembly that sings them. Hence, while a congregation may join in singing some hymns, I do not think they can well join in singing all; though the subject of them may be agreeable to the analogy of faith. The reason of this rests on the difference which we formerly stated between making use of a divine and of a human composition; in the former of which, the words are not always to be considered as our own or as expressive of the frame of our own spirits; while they are always to be so considered with respect to the latter.

Thus concerning the ordinance of singing; which we cannot but think included among those whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation. We are now led to consider the other ordinances; which are particularly insisted on in the remaining part of this work. That which next comes under our consideration, is the word read and preached.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE WORD.

QUESTION CLV. How is the word made effectual to salvation?

ANSWER. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will, of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions, of building them up in grace, and establishing their heart in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

HAVING had an account, in the foregoing Answer, of the ordinances by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to his church, and what they are, and having also considered that singing the praises of God is one of those ordinances; we are now to consider another ordinance which is made effectual to salvation,

namely, the word read or preached. We had occasion, under some former Answers, to speak of the word of God as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and we considered it as the only rule of faith and obedience, and as having all the properties which are necessary to its being such, so that we may depend upon it as a perfect and infallible revelation of all things necessary to be believed and done, in order to our enjoying God here, and attaining eternal life hereafter.^r We are now to consider the word as made the subject of our study and inquiry; without which it would be of no use to us.

The Word is to be Read and Explained.

We may observe in this Answer, then, something supposed; namely, that the word of God is to be read by us, and explained by those who are qualified and called to preach it. We are not, indeed, to conclude that the explanations of fallible men, how much soever they are fitted to preach the gospel, are of equal authority with the sacred oracles, as transmitted to us by those who received them by infallible inspiration from the Spirit of God. The text is much more to be depended on than the comment upon it; and the truth of the latter is to be tried by the former.^s Yet the explanation of the word by qualified persons is to be reckoned a great blessing, which God is pleased to bestow upon his church, in order to our understanding and making a right use of the written word. Accordingly, preaching, as well as the reading of the word, is an ordinance which the Spirit of God makes subservient to the salvation of those who believe. It is farther supposed, however, that the word is to be read by us, and that we are to attend to the preaching of it. To neglect either of these is to despise our own souls, and deprive ourselves of the advantage of God's instituted means of grace. Hence, we are not to content ourselves with merely the reading of the word of God in our closets or families, but we must embrace all opportunities for hearing it preached in a public manner, the one being no less an ordinance of God than the other.

It is objected by some, that they know as much as ministers can teach them; at least, that they know enough, if they could but practise it. This objection sometimes savours of pride and self-conceit, in those who suppose themselves to understand more of the doctrines of the gospel than they really do. It can hardly be said concerning the greatest number of professors, that they either know as much as they ought, or that it is not possible for them to make advances in knowledge by a diligent attendance on an able and faithful ministry. However, that we may give the utmost scope to the objection, we will allow that some Christians know more than many ministers, who are less skilful than others in the word of truth. But it must be observed that there are other ends of hearing the word besides the gaining of knowledge, namely, the bringing of the doctrines of the gospel to our remembrance,^t and their being impressed on our affections; and for attaining these ends, the wisest and best of men have not thought it below them to attend upon the ministry of those who knew less than themselves. Our Saviour was an hearer of the word before he entered on his public ministry;^u and though it might, I think, truly be said of him, that though he was but twelve years old, he knew more than the doctors, in the midst of whom he sat in the temple, yet 'he heard and asked them questions.' And David, though he professes himself to have 'more understanding than all his teachers';^x yet was glad to embrace all opportunities to go up into the house of the Lord; this being God's appointed means for a believer's making advances in grace.

The Word made Effectual to Salvation.

There are several things particularly mentioned in this Answer, in which the Spirit of God makes the word, read or preached, effectual to salvation.

1. By the word the mind is enlightened and furnished with the knowledge of

^r See vol. i. Quest. iii. and iv.

^t John xiv. 26.

^u Luke ii. 46.

^s Isa. viii. 20; 1 Thess. v. 21; Acts xvii. 11.

^x Psal. cxix. 99.

divine truths, which is a very great privilege. As faith is inseparably connected with salvation; so the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel is necessary to faith, and this is said to 'come by hearing.'^y We must not content ourselves, however, with a mere assent to what is revealed in the word of God; but must duly weigh the tendency of it to our sanctification and consolation, and admire the beauty, excellency, and glory that there is in the great doctrines of the gospel, as the divine perfections shine forth in them to the utmost. We must also duly consider the importance of those doctrines which are contained in the gospel, and how they are to be improved by us to our spiritual advantage. And when we find our hearts filled with love to Jesus Christ, in proportion to those greater measures of light which he is pleased to impart to us, so that we grow in grace as well as in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,^z then the word may be said to be made effectual to our salvation, as our minds are very much enlightened and improved in the knowledge of those things which lead to it.

2. The word is made effectual to bring us under conviction; so that we see ourselves sinful and miserable creatures. In particular, we are hereby led to see those depths of wickedness which are in our hearts by nature, which otherwise could not be sufficiently discerned by us, much less improved to our spiritual advantage.^a Would we take a view of the manifold sins committed in our lives, with all their respective aggravations, so as to lay to heart the guilt that we have contracted by them; or would we be affected with the consideration of the misery which will follow, as we not only deserve the wrath and curse of God, but, without an interest in forgiving grace, are bound to conclude ourselves liable to it; we must be led into a knowledge of these things by the word of God. Again, if we would know whether our convictions of sin are such as have a more immediate reference to salvation, we must inquire whether they are attended with grief and sorrow of heart for the intrinsic evil of sin, as well as for its sad consequences;^b or whether, when we have taken this view of it, we are led to apply for the remedy, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and strength against those corruptions which we have ground to charge ourselves with, and which have so much prevailed over us.^c

3. The word is made effectual to salvation, when what is contained in it tends to humble us and lay us low at the foot of God; when we acknowledge that all his judgments are right, or whatever punishments have been inflicted in execution of the threatenings which he has denounced have been less than our iniquities deserve;^d and when we receive reproofs for sins committed, with a particular application of them to ourselves, and are sensible of the guilt we have contracted. But that we may make a right use of the word, for bringing us to this state of mind, let us consider what humbling considerations are contained in it which have a tendency to answer this end. The word of God represents to us the infinite distance which there is between him and us; so that the best of creatures are in his sight 'as nothing,'^e less than nothing, and vanity.' We here behold God as infinitely perfect, and men as very imperfect, and unlike him; and in particular, we behold him as a God of infinite holiness, spotless purity, and ourselves as impure, polluted creatures. This is a very humbling consideration.^f Again, the word of God discovers to us the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts; whereby we are naturally inclined to rebel against him; and whereby also we should, had it not been for his preventing and renewing grace, have run with the vilest of men in all excess of riot. It likewise leads us into the knowledge of the various kinds of sin which we have ground to charge ourselves with in the course of our lives, the frequent omission of those duties which are required of us, our great neglect of relative duties in the station in which God has fixed us, and the injury we have done to others, whom we have caused to stumble or fall by our example, or, at least, by our unconcernedness about their spiritual welfare. It also discovers to us the various aggravations of sins committed, as they are against light, love,

^y Rom. x. 17; Acts viii. 30, 31.

^z 2 Peter iii. 18.

^a Jer. xvii. 9; Rom. vii. 9.

^b Psal. xxxviii. 18. compared with verse 4.

^c Acts xvi. 30; Psal. xix. 13; xxv. 11;

Jer. viii. 22.

^d Ezra ix. 13.

^e Isa. xl. 17.

^f Prov. xxx. 2; Isa. lxiv. 6.

mercies, and manifold engagements, which we are laid under ; and the great contempt which we have cast on the blessed Jesus, in disregarding, or not improving, the benefits of his mediation. All these things, duly considered, have a tendency to humble us ; and we are led into the discovery of them by the word of God.

4. The word of God is made effectual to salvation, as it has a tendency to drive sinners out of themselves, and to draw them to Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it shows them the utter impossibility of their saving themselves, by doing any thing which may bring them into a justified state, and so render them accepted in the sight of God ; and, on the other hand, it draws or leads them to Christ, whom they are enabled to behold by faith, as discovered in the gospel, to be a merciful and all-sufficient Saviour. The former is not only also antecedent, but necessary to the latter. For so long as we fancy that we have a sufficiency in ourselves to recommend us to God, and procure for us a right and title to eternal life, we shall never think of committing our souls into Christ's hand, in order to our obtaining salvation from him in his own way. Accordingly, the prophet brings in a self-conceited people as saying, ' We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.'^g No one will seek help or safety from Christ, who is not sensible of his own weakness, and of his being in the utmost danger without him. The first thing, then, which the Spirit of God does in the souls of men, when he makes the word effectual to salvation, is to lead them into an humble sense of their utter inability to do what is spiritually good or acceptable to God, or so to make atonement for the sins which they have committed against him that they may be brought into a justified state. It is, indeed, an hard matter to convince the sinner of this ; for he is very prone to be full of himself, sometimes to glory, with the Pharisee,^h in some religious duties he performs, and at other times to glory in his abstaining from those gross enormities which others are chargeable with. Or, if he will own himself to have exceeded many in sin ; yet he is ready to think that, by some expedient or other, he shall be able to make atonement for it. This sets him at a great distance from Christ. As ' they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,'ⁱ so persons of the character we are describing do not see their need of a Saviour, till they are convinced that they have nothing in themselves which can afford any relief to them, so as to deliver them from the guilt of sin and consequent misery. On this account our Saviour observes that ' publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God,'^k or are made sensible of their need of Christ, being convinced of sin, before the ' chief priests and elders,' who thought they had a righteousness of their own to justify them, and therefore refused to comply with the method of the gospel, in having recourse to Christ alone for this privilege. Now, the word of God is made use of by the Spirit to drive the sinner out of these strong-holds, and to show him that he cannot, by any means, recover himself out of that state of sin and misery into which he is plunged. It is a very hard thing for a person to be convinced of the truth of what our Saviour says, ' That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is an abomination in the sight of God,'^l that is, when it is put in the room of Christ and his righteousness ; and to convince us of this is one of the great ends to which the word is made subservient, when rendered effectual to salvation. Moreover, the word of God draws the soul to Christ, so that it is persuaded and induced, from gospel-motives, to come to him, and, at the same time, enabled so to do by the almighty power of God, without which he cannot come to him.^m The former draws objectively, the latter subjectively and internally. As to what the gospel does in this matter, it sets before us the excellency and glory of Christ as our great Mediator ; represents him as a divine person, and, consequently, the object of faith, and as such ' able to save, to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him.'ⁿ It considers him as having purchased salvation for his people ; so that they may obtain forgiveness through his blood. It also discovers him as not only able but willing to save all that come to him by faith ; so that he will in no wise cast them out.^o It also represents him as having a right to us ; we are his by purchase, and therefore it is our indispensable duty to give up ourselves unto him. It also makes

^g Jer. ii. 31.
^l Luke xvi. 15.

^h Luke xviii. 11.
^m John vi. 44.

ⁱ Matt. ix. 12.
ⁿ Heb. vii. 25.

^k Chap. xxi. 31.
^o John vi. 37.

known to us the greatness of his love, as the highest inducement to our giving ourselves up to him; the freeness, riches, and extensiveness of his grace, as ready to embrace the chief of sinners, and pass by all the injuries which they have done against him, and as giving them the utmost assurance that, having loved them in the world, he will love them to the end. Thus Christ is set forth in the gospel; and when the word is made effectual to salvation, the soul is induced, or, as it were, constrained to love him, and to yield the obedience of faith to him in all things.

5. The word is made of use by the Spirit, as a means to conform the soul to the image of God, and subdue it to his will. The image of God in man is defaced by sin; so that he is not only rendered unlike him, but averse to him. stripped of all his beauty, and become abominable and filthy in his sight, and, as long as he remains so, is unmeet for communion with him, or for obtaining salvation from him. Now, when the Spirit of God communicates special grace to sinners, he stamps this image afresh upon the soul, which he renews in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; he sanctifies all its powers and faculties, and subdues the will, so that it yields a cheerful obedience to the will of God, and delights in his law after the inward man, and its language is, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' This change the Spirit of God works in the heart, by his internal efficacious influence; as was formerly observed, when we considered the work of conversion and sanctification as brought about by him.^p This effect is also ascribed to the word as a moral instrument; it is not attained without the word, and is indeed the principal end of the preaching of the gospel. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,'^q and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

6. The word is farther said to be made effectual to salvation, as we are strengthened by it against temptation and corruption. By temptation those objects are presented to us which have a tendency to alienate our affections from God; and by corruption temptations are embraced and complied with, and the affections entangled in the snare which is laid for them. Satan or the world presents the bait, and corrupt nature is easily allured and taken by it. The tempter uses many wiles and stratagems to ensnare us, and our own hearts are deceitful above all things, and without much difficulty turned aside, and so led captive by Satan at his will. But when the Spirit of God makes the word effectual to salvation, he takes occasion by it to detect the fallacy, lays open the designs of our spiritual enemies, and the pernicious tendency of them, and internally fortifies the soul against them, so that it is 'kept from the paths of the destroyer';^r and this he does by presenting other and better objects to engage our affections, and leading us into the knowledge of those glorious truths which may prevent a sinful compliance with the solicitations of the devil. According to the nature of the temptation which may occur, we are directed to the precepts or promises contained in the word of God; which, being duly improved by us, have a tendency to keep the heart steady and fixed in the ways of God.

7. The word of God is made effectual by the Spirit, as he thereby builds the soul up in grace, and establishes it in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. The work of grace is not immediately brought to perfection, but is, in a progressive way, making advances towards it. We are first made holy by the renovation of our hearts and lives, and made partakers of those spiritual consolations which accompany or flow from the work of sanctification; and then we are built up in holiness and comfort, and so go from strength to strength, and are more and more established in the ways of God. Now this work is effected in us by the preaching of the word, whereby we are said to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ';^s so that every step we take in our way to heaven, from the time that our faces are first turned towards it, we are enabled to go on safely and comfortably, till the work of grace is perfected in glory.

p See Quest. lxvii, lxviii.

q 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

r Psal. xvii. 4.

s 2 Pet. iii. 18.

BY WHOM AND HOW THE WORD IS TO BE READ.

QUESTION CLVI. *Is the word of God to be read by all?*

ANSWER. Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families, to which end the holy scriptures are to be translated out of the original, into vulgar languages.

QUESTION CLVII. *How is the word of God to be read?*

ANSWER. The holy scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them, with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them, with diligence and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

THE word being made effectual to salvation, which was the subject last insisted on, supposes not only that we read it as translated into vulgar languages, but that we understand what we read, in order to our applying it to our particular case, and improving it for our spiritual advantage. These things are next to be considered, as contained in the Answers we are now to explain.

The Word to be read by and to all men.

We have an account in the former of these Answers, of the obligation which all persons are under to read, or at least, attend to the reading of the word of God.

1. It is to be read publicly in the congregation, by those who are appointed for that purpose. The church and all the public worship performed in it, are founded on the doctrines contained in scripture. Hence, every one who would be made wise to salvation, ought to be well acquainted with scripture. Besides, the reading of it publicly, as a part of the worship performed in the church, is not only a testimony of the high esteem which we have for it, but will be of great use to those who, through a sinful neglect to read it in families, or in their private retirement, or who, through the stupidity of their hearts, and the many incumbrances of worldly business, will not allow themselves time to do so, remain strangers to those great and important truths which are contained in it. Moreover, that the public reading of the word is a duty, appears from the charge which the apostle gives that the epistle which he wrote to the church at Thessalonica should 'be read unto all the holy brethren.'^t And he gives a similar charge to the church at Colosse.^u We may add, that the scripture is not only to be read, but explained; which is the principal design of the preaching of it. This is no new practice. For the Old Testament was not only read, but explained in the synagogues 'every sabbath day;' and the explaining of it is called, by a metonymy, 'reading Moses,'^x that is, explaining the law which was given by him. Thus 'Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood, opened the book in the sight of all the people,' and, with some of his brethren who assisted him, 'read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,' that is, the meaning of it.^y In like manner our Saviour 'went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up and read a part of the holy scriptures in the prophecy of Isaiah; and when he had done so, he applied it to himself, and showed them how 'it was fulfilled in their ears.'^z It is supposed, therefore, that the word is to be publicly read.

The only thing in this Answer which needs explanation is the clause, 'All are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation.' We are not to suppose that there is an order of men whom Christ has appointed to be readers in the church, distinct from ministers. But the meaning of the expression may be, that all are not to read the word of God together, in a public assembly, with a loud voice; for to do so would tend rather to confusion than to edification. Nor ought any to be appointed to read, but such as are grave, pious, and able to read

^t 1 Thess. v. 27.

^y Neh. viii. 4—8.

^u Col. iv. 16.

^z Luke iv. 16—24.

^x Acts xv. 21.

distinctly, for the edification of others. And who is so fit for this work, as the minister whose office is, not only to read the scripture, but to explain it in the ordinary course of his ministry?

2. The word of God is to be read in our families. This duty is absolutely necessary for the propagating of religion in them. It is indeed shamefully neglected; and the neglect of it is one great reason of the ignorance and decay of piety in the rising generation, and is also contrary to God's command,^a as well as the example of those who are highly commended for this practice. Thus, 'Abraham commanded his children, and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord.'^b

3. The word of God ought to be read by every one, in private; and that not only occasionally, but frequently, as one of the great duties of life. Thus God says to Joshua,^c 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.'^d And our Saviour commands the Jews to 'search the scriptures.'^e In some of his discourses with them too, though he was sensible that they were a degenerate people, yet he takes it for granted that they had not altogether laid aside this duty.^f This practice, especially where the word of God has not only been read, but the meaning of it sought after and attended to with great diligence, is recommended as a peculiar excellency in Christians, who, as attending to it, are styled 'more noble' than others who are defective in this duty.^g That it is the duty of every one to read the word of God, appears from the fact that it is given us with this design. If God is pleased, as it were, to send us an epistle from heaven, it is a very great instance of contempt cast on it, as well as on the divine condescension expressed in it, for us to neglect to read it. Does he impart his mind to us in scripture; and is it not our indispensable duty to pay the utmost regard to it?^h Moreover, our own advantage should be a farther inducement to us to read the word of God; since his design in giving it was that we might believe, and that believing, we may attain life through the name of Christ.ⁱ The word of God is sometimes compared to 'a sword,' for our defence against our spiritual enemies;^k and is therefore designed for use, without which it is of no advantage to us. It is elsewhere compared to 'a lamp to our feet';^l which is not designed for an ornament, but to guide us in the right way; so that we must attend to its direction. It is also compared to 'food,' whereby we are said to be 'nour-

hed up in the words of faith and good doctrine;' and as 'new-born babes' we are exhorted to 'desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.'^m But this end cannot be attained unless the word be read and applied by us to our own necessities.

We are now led to take notice of the opposition which the Papists make to the general reading of scripture. They deny the common people the liberty of reading the scriptures in their own language, without leave given them from the bishop, or some other of their spiritual guides, who are authorized to allow or deny this privilege, as they think fit. As an instance of their opposition, they have sometimes burnt whole impressions of the Bible, in the open market place; as well as expressed their contempt by burning particular copies of scripture, or dragging them through the streets, throwing them in the kennels, and stamping them under feet, or tearing them in pieces, as though the Bible were the vilest book in the world. Some persons have even been burnt for reading it. That it might be brought into the utmost contempt, the Papists have cast the most injurious reproaches upon it, calling it a bending rule, a nose of wax, a dumb judge; and some have blasphemed it, by saying that it has no more authority than *Æsop's fables*, and have compared the psalms of David to profane ballads. By all this conduct, too, they pretend to consult the good of the people, that they may not be misled by scripture. They generally allege in their vindication, that they oppose, not so much the reading of the scripture, as the reading of those translations of it which have been made by Protestants; and they say that it is our Bible, not

^a Deut. vi. 6, 7.

^b Gen. xviii. 19; Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4, 5.

^c Josh. i. 8.

^d Psal. i. 2.

^e John v. 39.

^f Matt. xii. 5; Chap. xxi. 42; Luke vi. 3.

^g Acts xvii. 11.

^h Rev. i. 11. compared with Chap. ii. 29.

ⁱ John xv. 31; Rom. x. 17; Chap. xv. 4.

^k Eph. vi. 17.

^l Psal. cxix. 105.

^m 1 Pet. ii. 2.

that which they allow to be the word of God, which they treat with such injurious contempt. The truth is, however, they do not so much bring objections against scripture, taken from some passages which they pretend to be falsely translated; but their design is, plainly, to keep the people in ignorance, that they may not, as the consequence of their reading it, imbibe those doctrines which will, as they pretend, turn them aside from the faith of the church. Hence, they usually maintain that the common people ought to be kept in ignorance, as an expedient to excite devotion; and that, by this means, they will be the more humble, and pay a greater deference to those unwritten traditions which are propagated by them, and pretended to be of equal authority with scripture, which the common people must take up with instead of it. Indeed, the consequence corresponds with their desire; for the people appear to be grossly ignorant, and think themselves bound to believe whatever their leaders pretend to be true, without exercising a judgment of discretion, or endeavouring to know the mind of God.

What the Papists generally allege in opposing the common people's reading the Bible, is that scripture contains 'some things hard to be understood,' as the apostle Peter expresses, 'which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.'ⁿ Now, it must be allowed that some things contained in scripture are hard to be understood; inasmuch as the gospel contains some mysteries which finite wisdom cannot comprehend; and the great doctrines of the gospel are sometimes unintelligible by us, by reason of the ignorance and alienation of our minds from the life of God, as well as from the imperfection of the present state, in which we know but in part. Yet they who, with diligence and humility, desire and earnestly seek after the knowledge of those truths which are more immediately subservient to their salvation, shall find that their labour is not lost. But in following on to know the Lord, they shall know as much of him as is necessary to their glorifying and enjoying him; as the prophet says, 'Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord.'^o It is to be owned that there are some depths in scripture which cannot be fathomed by a finite understanding; and these should raise our admiration, and put us upon adoring the unsearchable wisdom of God, as well as excite us to an humble confession that 'we are but of yesterday, and know' comparatively 'nothing.'^p Yet there are many doctrines which we may attain a clear knowledge of, and improve to the glory of God in the conduct of our lives. Thus the prophet speaks of 'an highway,' called 'the way of holiness,' concerning which he says, that 'way-faring men,' who walk in it, 'though fools,' that is, such as have the meanest capacity as to other things, 'shall not err therein';^q that is, they who humbly desire the teaching of the Spirit, whereby they may be made acquainted with the mind and will of God, shall not be led out of the way by any thing which he has revealed to his people in his word. It is very injurious to the sacred oracles to infer that, because some things are hard to be understood, all who read them must necessarily wrest them to their own destruction. Besides, the apostle does not say that all do so, but only those who are 'unlearned and unstable';—'unlearned,' that is, altogether unacquainted with the doctrines of the gospel, not making them the matter of their study and inquiry; and 'unstable,' that is, such as give way to scepticism, or they whose faith is not built on the right foundation, but are inclined to turn aside from the truth with every wind of doctrine. This God's people may hope to be kept from, while they study the holy scriptures, and earnestly desire to be made wise by them unto salvation. [See Note U, page 472.]

The Papists farther allege against the common people being permitted to read the scriptures, that it will make them proud, and induce them to inquire into those things which do not belong to them, so that they will soon think themselves wiser than their teachers. They allege also that the reading of the scriptures by the common people has been the occasion of all the heresies which are in the world. But whatever ill consequences attend a person's reading of scripture are to be ascribed, not to the use, but to the abuse of it. Will any one say that we ought to abstain from eating and drinking, because some are guilty of excess in them, by

gluttony and drunkenness? No more ought we to abstain from reading the scriptures, because some make a wrong use of them. As to its being supposed that by reading the scriptures some, through pride, will think themselves wiser than their teachers, we will allow they may do so, without passing a wrong judgment on themselves. But it is an injurious treatment of mankind, to keep the world in ignorance that they may not detect the fallacies, or expose the errors, of those who pretend to be their guides in matters of faith. As to the allegation that the reading of scripture has been the occasion of many heresies in the world, I am rather inclined to think that this evil ought to be charged on men's neglect of that duty, or, at least, on their not studying the scripture with diligence and an humble dependence on God for his blessing.

It may be observed, that whatever reasons are assigned by the Papists for their denying the people the liberty of reading the scripture, seem to carry a pretence of great kindness to them. The scriptures are pretended to be withheld from them that they may not be led out of the way, and do themselves hurt, just as it is a dangerous thing to put a knife or a sword into a child's or a madman's hand; and thus they suppose the common people to be ignorant, and would keep them so. But, whatever reasons they assign, the true reason why they so much oppose the reading of scripture is, that it detects and exposes the absurdity of many doctrines which are imbibed by them, and which will not bear to be tried by it. If they can but persuade their votaries, that whatever is handed down by tradition as a rule of faith, is to be received without the least hesitation, though contrary to the mind of God in scripture, they are not likely to meet with any opposition from them, let them advance doctrines never so absurd or contrary to reason.

It may be inquired whether they universally prohibit the reading of scripture? Now, it must be allowed that the vulgar Latin version of it may be read by any one who understands it, without falling under their censure. But then they are sensible that the greater part of the common people cannot understand it. Besides, though they should understand it, it is so corrupt a translation, that it seems plainly calculated to give countenance to the errors they advance.^r It hence appears from their whole management in this matter, that their design is to deprive mankind of one of the greatest blessings which God has granted them, and to discourage persons from the performance of a duty which is absolutely necessary to promote the interest of God and religion in the world. We must conclude, then, that it is an invaluable privilege that we are not only permitted but commanded to read the scriptures, as translated into the language which is generally understood by us.

We are thus led to consider the inference deduced in the latter part of the Answer which we are explaining, namely, that the scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages. That this ought to be done is evident from the fact that reading signifies nothing where the words are not understood. Nor is every private Christian obliged to addict himself to the study of the languages in which the scriptures were written; for this is a work of so much pains and difficulty, that few have opportunity or inclination to apply themselves to it to any considerable purpose. Hence, the words of scripture must be rendered intelligible to all, and, consequently, translated into a language they understand. That this ought to be done may be farther argued from the care of providence as to the languages in which scripture was originally given. The scriptures were delivered to the Jews, in their own language. The greatest part of the Old Testament

^r Many instances of this might be produced. Thus in Gen. iii. 15, instead of 'it shall bruise thy head,' they read 'she,' by which they understand the Virgin Mary, 'shall bruise thy head,' that is, the serpent's. In Gen. xlviii. 16, instead of, 'my name shall be named on them,' which are the words of Jacob concerning Joseph's sons, they read 'my name shall be invoked, or called upon by them;' which favours the doctrine of invocation of saints. In Psal. xcix. 5, instead of, 'Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool,' they read, 'worship his footstool,' which gives countenance to their error of paying divine adoration to places or things. In Heb. xi. 21, instead of 'Jacob worshipped leaning on the top of his staff,' they read 'he worshipped the top of his staff.' And in Heb. xiii. 16, instead of, 'with such sacrifices God is well pleased,' they read, 'with such sacrifices God is merited' which they make use of to establish the merit of good works.

was written in Hebrew; and those few sections or chapters in Ezra and Daniel, which were written in the Chaldee language, were not inserted till they understood that language.^s And when the world generally understood the Greek tongue, so that there was no necessity for the common people to learn it in schools, and the Hebrew was not understood by those nations for whom the gospel was designed; it pleased God to deliver the New Testament in the Greek language. It is hence beyond dispute that he intended that the scripture should not only be read, but understood by the common people. Moreover, when the gospel was sent to various nations of different languages, the Spirit of God, by an extraordinary and miraculous dispensation in which he bestowed on them the gift of tongues, furnished the apostles to speak to every one in their own language; a dispensation which would have been needless, if it were not necessary for persons to read or hear the holy scriptures with understanding.

Directions for Reading the Word of God.

We are now to consider how the word of God is to be read, that we may understand and improve what it contains to our spiritual advantage. On this subject there are several directions given in the latter of the Answers we are explaining.

I. We must read the scriptures with a high and reverent esteem of them, arising from a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God. That they are so, has been proved by several arguments.^t We will suppose that those who read them are persuaded that they are so; and their having this persuasion will beget a high and reverent esteem of them. The perfections of God, and particularly his wisdom, sovereignty, and goodness, shine forth with as much glory in his word, as they do in any of his works. It hence has a preference to all human compositions. Whatever is revealed in it is to be admired and depended on for its unerring wisdom and infallible verity; so that it is impossible for those who understand and improve it, to be turned aside by it from the way of truth. We are also to consider the use which God makes of it, to propagate his kingdom and interest in the world. It is by means of it that he convinces men of sin, and discovers to them the way of obtaining forgiveness of it, and victory over it; and thoroughly furnishes them unto every good work.^u For this reason the wisest and best of men have expressed the highest esteem and value for it. The psalmist mentions the love he had to it, as a person who was in a rapture: 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'^x 'It is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.'^y Such high veneration as this we all ought to have; otherwise we may sometimes be tempted to read it with prejudice, and may, in consequence, through the corruption of our nature, be prone to cavil at it, as we sometimes do at those writings which are merely human, and which savour of the weakness and imperfection of their authors; and thus it will be impossible for us to receive any saving advantage from reading it.

II. We must, in reading the word of God, be sensible that he alone can enable us to understand it. To read the scriptures and not understand them, will be of no advantage to us. Hence, it is supposed that we are endeavouring to have our minds rightly informed and furnished with the knowledge of divine truths. But by reason of the corruption, ignorance, and depravity of our natures, this knowledge cannot be attained without a peculiar blessing from God attending our endeavours. We ought therefore to glorify him, by dependence on him, for this privilege,—sensible that all spiritual wisdom is from him. For if we would see a beauty and a glory in those things which are revealed in scripture, and be thoroughly established in the doctrines of the gospel, so as not to be in danger of being turned aside from

^s There is, indeed, one verse in Jeremiah, chap. x. 11, written in Chaldee, which, it is probable, they did not at that time well understand. But the prophet by this intimates to them, that they should be carried into a country where that language should be used; and therefore the Holy Ghost furnishes them with a message that they were to deliver to the Chaldeans from the Lord, in their own language. 'The gods, that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.'

^t See Quest. iv.

^u 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^x Psal. cxix. 97.

^y Psal. xix. 10.

them, or, especially, if we would improve them to our being made wise unto salvation, we must consider these objects of desire as the gift of God. It is he alone who can enable us to understand his word aright; for it is not less necessary that there should be an internal illumination of our minds, than that there should be an external revelation as the matter of our studies and inquiries. Thus our Saviour not only repeated the words of those scriptures which concerned himself, to the two disciples going to Emmaus; but 'he opened their understandings, that they might understand them.'^z Without this divine illumination, a person may have the brightest parts, and most penetrating judgment in other respects, and yet be unacquainted with the mind of God in his word, and inclined to embrace those doctrines which are contrary to it. In particular, if God is not pleased to succeed our endeavours, we shall remain destitute of the experimental knowledge of divine truths, which is absolutely necessary to salvation.

III. We must read the word of God with a desire to know, believe, and obey his will, revealed in it. If we do not desire to know or understand the meaning of scripture, it will remain no better than a sealed book to us; and, instead of receiving advantage from it, we shall be ready to entertain prejudices against it, till we lay it aside with the utmost dislike, and, in consequence, be utterly estranged from the life of God through the ignorance and vanity of our minds. We must also read the word of God with a desire to have our faith established by it, that our feet may be set upon a rock, and we may be delivered from all manner of doubts and hesitations, with respect to those important truths which are revealed in it. And we ought to desire, not only to believe, but to yield a constant and cheerful obedience to every thing which God therein requires of us.

IV. Our reading the word of God ought to be accompanied with meditation, and the exercise of self-denial. Our thoughts should be wholly and intensely taken up with the subject of it as persons who are studiously, and with the greatest earnestness, pressing after the knowledge of those doctrines which are of the highest importance, that our profiting in the study of it may appear to ourselves and others.^a As to the exercise of self-denial, all those perverse reasonings which our carnal minds are prone to suggest against the matter of divine revelation, are to be laid aside. If we are resolved to believe nothing but what we can comprehend, we ought to consider that the gospel contains unsearchable mysteries, which surpass finite wisdom; so that we must be content to acknowledge that we know but in part. There is a deference to be paid to the wisdom of God which eminently appears in every thing he has discovered to us in his word; and hence we must adore the divine perfections which are displayed in it, whilst we retain an humble sense of the imperfection of our own knowledge. Our reason is not to be considered as useless; but we must desire that it may be sanctified, and inclined to receive whatever God is pleased to impart. We are to exercise the grace of self-denial also with respect to that obstinacy of our wills whereby they are naturally disinclined to acquiesce in, approve of, and yield obedience to, the will of God; so that we may be entirely satisfied that every thing which he commands in his word, is holy, just, and good.

V. The word of God is to be read with fervent prayer. 'If any man lack wisdom,' says the apostle, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.'^b The advantage which we expect by reading the word, is, as was formerly observed, his gift; and hence we are humbly to supplicate him for it. There are many things in his word which are hard to be understood; so that we ought to say, whenever we take the scriptures into our hands, as the psalmist does, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.'^c We may, in this case, humbly acknowledge the weakness of our capacities, and the blindness of our minds, which render it necessary for us to desire to be instructed by him in the way of truth. We may also plead that his design in giving us his word, was that it might be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths; so that we dread the thoughts of walking in darkness, when there is such a clear discovery of those things which are so glorious and necessary

z Luke xxiv. 45.

a 1 Tim. iv. 15.

b James i. 5.

c Psal. cxix. 18.

to be known. We may also plead that our Lord Jesus is revealed to his people as the prophet of his church; and that whatever office he is invested with, he delights to execute, as his glory is concerned in his doing so; so that we trust and hope that he will lead us, by his Spirit, into all truth. We may also plead the impossibility of our attaining the knowledge of divine things, without his assistance; and how much it would redound to his glory, as well as our own comfort and advantage, if he will be pleased to lead us into the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in him. This we cannot but importunately desire, being sensible of the sad consequences of our being destitute of it; inasmuch as we should remain in darkness, though favoured with the light of the gospel.

VI. The word of God is to be read with diligence, and with attention to its matter and scope. We have hitherto been directed, in this Answer, to apply ourselves to the reading of scripture, with that frame of spirit which becometh Christians, who desire to know the mind and will of God;—that we ought to have our minds disengaged from those prejudices which would hinder our receiving any advantage from it, and to exercise those graces which the nature and importance of the duty require; that we ought to depend upon God, and address ourselves to him by faith and prayer for the knowledge of those divine truths which are contained in scripture. But, in this last Head, we are led to speak of some other methods conducive to our understanding scripture; which are the effects of diligence and of attention to the sense of the words of it, and the scope and design of them. This being an useful Head, I shall take occasion to enlarge on it more than I have done on others, and to add some things which may serve as a farther means to direct us how we may read the scriptures with understanding. I might here observe that they who are well acquainted with the languages in which they were written, and are able to make just remarks on the words, phrases, and particles used in them, some of which cannot be expressed in another language without losing much of their native beauty and significance, have certainly the advantage of all others. But as the greater part of mankind cannot enjoy this advantage, they being strangers to the Greek and Hebrew languages, they must have recourse to some other helps for the attaining of the desired end.

1. It will be of great use for them to consult those expositions which we have of the whole or some particular parts of scripture; of which some are more large, others concise,—some critical, others practical. I shall forbear making any remarks tending to depreciate the performance of some expositors, or extol the judgment of others; only this must be observed, that many have passed over some difficulties of scripture, and by their omissions have given a degree of disgust to the more inquisitive part of Christians. The course they have pursued may be attributed, in some instances, to a commendable modesty, which we find not only in those who have written in our own language, but in those who have written in others, whereby they tacitly confess, either that they could not solve the difficulties which they pass by, or that it was better to leave them undetermined, than to attempt solutions which, at best, would amount to little more than probable conjectures. It may also be observed that others who have commented on scripture, seemed to be prepossessed with a particular scheme of doctrine, which, if duly considered, is not very defensible; and they are obliged, sometimes, to strain the sense of a text, that it may appear to speak agreeably to their own sentiments. Their expositions, however, may, in other respects, be used with great advantage.

We may add, that as the word preached is designed to lead us into the knowledge of scripture doctrines, we ought to attend upon and improve it, as a means conducive to this end, and to bless God for the great helps and advantages we enjoy. But more shall be said on this subject under some following Answers relating to the preaching and hearing of the word.^d

2. We ought to make the best use we can of those translations of scripture which we have in our own language. If we compare these together, we shall find, not only that the style in which one is written differs from that of another, agreeably to the respective times in which they were written, but that they differ very much

^d See Quest. clix, clx.

in the sense they give of many places of scripture. Their differences may easily be accounted for from the various acceptations of the same Hebrew or Greek word, as may be observed in all other languages. There are also difficulties relating to the proper manner of translating some particular phrases, or to the various senses in which several particles are to be understood. Now, by comparing translations together, they who are unacquainted with the original, will be sometimes led into a sense more agreeable to the context and the analogy of faith, by one of them, than by another. But we will suppose the English reader to confine himself to the translation which is generally used by us. Though this cannot be supposed to be of equal authority with the original, or so perfect that it admits of no correction as to any word or phrase which it contains; yet I would be far from taking occasion to depreciate it, or to say any thing which may stagger the faith of any, as though we were in danger of being led aside by it from the way of truth. Some who plead for the necessity of a new translation of the Bible, pretend that we are in some such danger; though it is much to be feared, that if any new translation should be attempted, it would deviate more from the sense of the Holy Ghost, than that which we now have, and have reason to bless God for, and which, I cannot but think, comes as near the original as most that are extant. We shall therefore consider how this may be used to the best advantage, for our understanding the mind of God.

Now, let it be observed, that there is another translation of words referred to in the margin of our Bibles, which will sometimes give very great light to the sense of the text, and appear more emphatic, and rather to be acquiesced in. I shall give a short specimen of some texts of scripture which may be illustrated from the marginal reading. In Job iv. 18, it is said, 'He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.' In the margin, it is observed that the words may be read, 'He put no trust in his servants, nor in his angels, in whom he put light.' This reading points out the excellency of the nature of angels, and the wisdom with which they are endowed; and shows that, notwithstanding these, God put no trust in them, not having thought fit to make use of them in creating the world, nor having committed to them the government of it. Again, in Isaiah liii. 3, it is said, speaking of our Saviour, 'We hid, as it were, our faces from him;' but in the margin it is, 'He hid, as it were, his face from us.' The latter reading implies that as he bore our grief, so he was charged with our guilt; and accordingly is represented, as having his face covered, as an emblem of his bearing it. Or it denotes his concealing or veiling his glory, as he who was really in the form of God, appeared in the form of a servant. Again, in Jer. xlii. 20, the prophet reproving the people, says, 'Ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, pray for us;' but in the margin it is, 'You have used deceit against your souls.' Here the marginal reading contains a farther illustration of the text; as it not only denotes their hypocrisy, but the consequence of it, namely, their destruction. This sense agrees very well with the threatening denounced in verse 22, that they should 'die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.' The same prophet, in chap. x. 14, speaking of idolaters, says, 'Every man is brutish in his knowledge;' but in the margin it is, 'Every man is more brutish than to know.' Here their stupidity is assigned rather to their ignorance than to their knowledge. Again, in Zechariah xii. 5, it is said, 'The governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God;' but in the margin it is, 'The governors of Judah shall say, There is strength to me, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the Lord of hosts.' This reading seems more agreeable to what follows; which contains several promises of deliverance and salvation, which God would work for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Hence, we are not to suppose them saying, 'Jerusalem shall be our strength;' but, 'The Lord of hosts shall be our strength,' who is a safe-guard to Jerusalem, as well as to the governors of Judah. Again, in Acts xvii. 23, it is said, 'As I passed by, and beheld your devotions;' but in the margin it is, 'the gods, whom ye worship,' or the things ye pay divine honour to; a reading which is very agreeable to the context, and the design of the apostle. Again, in chap. xxii. 29, it is said, 'They departed from him, which should have examined him,' meaning Paul; but in the margin it is, 'tortured him;' and this

reading refers to the Roman custom of scourging, and thereby tormenting one who was under examination for supposed crimes. Again, in Gal. i. 14, the apostle says, 'I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals;' but in the margin it is, 'my equals in years;' a reading which seems much more agreeable to the apostle's design. Again, in Heb. ii. 7, it is said in the text, 'Thou madest him,' that is, our Saviour, 'a little lower than the angels;' but in the margin it is, 'a little while inferior to them.' Here there is a reference to his state of humiliation, which continued, comparatively, but a little while.

Further, in order to our making a right use of our English translation, that we may understand the mind of God contained in it, let it be observed that, by reason of the conciseness of the style of the Hebrew and Greek texts, there are several words left out, which must be supplied to complete the sense, and that these are inserted in an Italic character. Now, it will not be difficult for us to determine whether the insertion be just or not; when we consider that the translators often take their direction in making it from some words, either expressed or understood, in the context. Thus in Heb. viii. 7, 'If the first covenant had been faultless,' &c., the word 'covenant' is inserted, as it is also in verse 13, because it is expressly mentioned in verses 8—10. Again, in chap. x. 6, it is said, 'In sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure.' Here the word 'sacrifices' is supplied from the foregoing verse; and, for the same reason, 'offerings' might as well have been supplied, as it is verse 8. And, in verse 25, we are commanded to 'exhort one another;' where 'one another' is supplied from the foregoing verse. Again, in 1 Pet. iv. 16, 'If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed,' the words, 'any man suffer' are inserted as agreeable to what is mentioned verse 15. Again, in Ephes. ii. 1, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,' the words 'hath he quickened' are supplied from verse 5; and our translators might as well have added, 'you hath he quickened, together with him,' namely, Christ. These instances I mention only as a specimen of insertions to complete the sense in our translation; and we shall find that the words supplied in other scriptures are, for the most part, sufficiently just. But if they be not so, they are subject to correction, without the least imputation of altering the words of scripture, while we are endeavouring to give the true sense of it; and we may be allowed, without perverting the sacred writings, sometimes to supply other words instead of them, which may seem more agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost. Thus, in Eph. vi. 12, it is said, 'We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Here the word 'places' is supplied by our translators; and, in the margin, it is observed that it might as well be rendered 'heavenly places.' Now, because there is no spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, they choose, without regard to the proper sense of the Greek word, to render it 'high places;' while in chap. iii. 10, where there is no appearance of such an objection, they render the same word, 'heavenly places;' though, I think, the word in both scriptures, might better be rendered 'in what concerns heavenly things.' Again, in 2 Cor. vi. 1, it is said, 'We, as workers together with him, beseech you,' &c. Here, 'with him,' is supplied to complete the sense; but, I think, it might better have been left out, and then the sense would have been, ministers are 'workers together with one another,' and not 'together with God.' They are honoured to be employed by God, as moral instruments which he makes use of; but they have no other causality in bringing about the work of grace. The principal reason why the words 'with him' are supplied, is that the supplement seems agreeable to the apostle's mode of speaking, in 1 Cor. iii. 9, 'We are labourers together with God.' But, I think, those words might better be rendered, 'Labourers together of God;'^e meaning that we are jointly engaged in his work. There is, therefore, no reason from this passage to supply the words 'with him,' in the text just referred to.

3. If we would understand the sense of a particular text of scripture, we must consider its connection with the context. Accordingly, we must observe the scope, design, or argument insisted on, in the paragraph in which it is contained. Thus, in Rom. viii., the apostle's design in general, is to prove that there is 'no condemna-

tion to them which are in Christ Jesus,' and to show who they are who may conclude themselves to be interested in this privilege, together with the many blessings which are connected with it or flow from it. In Heb. i. the apostle's principal design is, as he intimates in the fourth verse, to prove the excellency and glory of Christ, as Mediator, above the angels; and this argument is particularly insisted on, and illustrated, in the following part of the chapter. In chap. xi. his design is to give an account of the great things the Old Testament church were enabled to do and suffer by faith; on which subject there is an induction of particulars. In Rom. v. the apostle insists on the doctrine of original sin, and shows how sin and death first entered into the world, and by what means we may expect to be delivered from them; and so he takes occasion to compare Adam and Christ as two distinct heads or representatives of those who were included in the respective covenants which mankind were under,—by the former of whom, sin reigned unto death, and, by the latter, grace and righteousness unto eternal life. Again, in chap. vii., especially from verse 5, the general argument insisted on, is the conflict and opposition which there is between sin and grace, and the manner in which corrupt nature discovers itself in the souls of the regenerated, together with the disturbance and uneasiness which it constantly gives them. In Psal. lxxxviii. we have an account of the distress which a soul is in, when under divine desertion, and brought to the very brink of despair. In Psal. lxxii., under the type of the glory of Solomon's kingdom, and the advantages his subjects should receive, the glory and excellency of Christ's kingdom is illustrated, together with the gospel state and its blessings. In Psal. li. David represents a true penitent as addressing himself to God for forgiveness; though making particular reference to his own case, after he had sinned in the matter of Uriah. Again, the general argument of Isa. liii. is to set forth the sufferings of Christ whereby he made satisfaction for sin, together with the glory redounding to himself, and the advantages accruing to believers.

Further, we must, in examining any passage, consider the method made use of in managing the argument; whether it is close reasoning, and the deduction of consequences from premises; or whether it is an explanation of what was designed to inform the judgment, and was laid down before in a general proposition; or whether the principal design of the paragraph is to regulate the conduct of our lives, awaken our consciences out of a stupid frame, or excite in us becoming affections; and we are to observe how every part of it is adapted to answer these ends. Moreover, we are to consider who is the person speaking or spoken to; whether they are the words of God, the church, or the inspired writer; and, whether they are directed to particular persons, or to all men in general. Here we may often observe that, in the same paragraph, there is an apostrophe, or turning of the discourse from one person to another. Nothing is more common than this in the poetical writings of scripture. Thus in the Psalms of David, sometimes God is represented as speaking to man, and then man as speaking to or concerning God. We may observe this, for example, in Psal. cxxxvii. In verses 1—4, there is a relation of the church's troubles in Babylon; in verses 5, 6, the psalmist addresses his discourse to the church: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning;' in verse 7, he speaks to God, praying that he would 'remember the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof;' and in verses 8, 9, he turns his discourse to Babylon, as a nation destined to destruction. Again, in Psal. ii. he speaks concerning the rage of the heathen against Christ and his church, and that disappointment and ruin which they should meet with for it. In verse 6, he represents God the Father as saying concerning Christ, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;' in verses 7, 8, Christ is brought in as making mention of the decree of God relating to his character and office as Mediator, and the success of his kingdom as extended to 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' pursuant to his intercession, which was founded on his satisfaction; and, in verses 10—12, the psalmist turns his discourse to those persecuting powers, or the kings of the earth, whom he had spoken of in the former part of the psalm, and instructs them what methods they should take to escape God's righteous vengeance. Such changes as these of persons

speaking, or spoken to, may be observed in many of the psalms.^f Throughout the whole Book of Canticles, also, there is an interchangeable discourse between Christ and his church, which is sometimes called his spouse, at other times his sister. Sometimes he speaks to the church, and at other times of it. In other places the church is represented as speaking to him, or to the daughters of Jerusalem, namely, those professors of religion who had little more than a form of godliness. Again, we often find that there is a change with respect to the persons speaking, spoken to, or of, in the writings of the prophets, as well as in the poetical writings. This may be observed in Isa. lxiii., throughout the chapter. And, in Micah vii. 18—20, there is a change of persons in almost every sentence: ‘Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, &c. He retaineth not his anger for ever; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.’

We are farther to consider the occasion of what is laid down in any chapter, paragraph, or book of scripture, which we desire to understand. Thus the particular occasion of the book of Lamentations, was the approaching ruin of Judah, and the miseries which they should be exposed to when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans. That this was the occasion of the book appears from the subject of it; though, it may be, that which was the more immediate occasion of it, was that the prophet might lament the death of good Josiah.^g This event the prophet probably had a peculiar eye to, when he says, ‘The crown is fallen from our head;’^h as well as the destruction of the whole nation which should soon follow, in which their civil and religious liberties would be invaded by their enemies, who would oppress them and lead them captive.—Again, the principal occasion of the apostle’s writing the epistle to the Galatians, was that he might establish some among them in the faith of the gospel, who were much disposed to turn aside from him who had called them, and to embrace another scheme of religion which was subversive of the gospel. Accordingly, in chap. i. 6, by this ‘other gospel’ which he dissuades them from turning aside unto, we are to understand those doctrines which they had imbibed from those false teachers who endeavoured either to re-establish the observance of the ceremonial law, or to put them upon seeking righteousness and life from their observing the precepts of the moral law,—a course which tended to overthrow the doctrine of justification by Christ’s righteousness, on which the apostle often insists both in this and in his other epistles.—This method of inquiring into the occasion of what is mentioned in particular paragraphs of scripture, will often give light to some things contained in them. Thus we read, in Matt. xxi. 23—27, that the chief priests and elders asked our Saviour the question, ‘By what authority doest thou these things?’ Now, had this question proceeded from an humble mind, desirous to be convinced by his reply to it, or had he not often, in their hearing, asserted the authority by which he did those things; he would, doubtless, have told them that he received a commission to do them from the Father, and that every miracle which he wrought was, as it were, a confirming seal annexed to it. But our Saviour, knowing the design of the question, and the character of the persons who asked it, does not think fit to make any reply to it, rather choosing to put them to silence, by proposing another question to them which he knew they would not be forward to answer, relating to the baptism of John, namely, whether it was from heaven, or of men. This was certainly the best method he could have taken; for he dealt with them as cavillers, who were to be put to silence, and at the same time made ashamed.

4. In order to our understanding the sense of scripture, we must, so far as it is possible, compare the phrases or modes of expression as well as the subject insisted on, with what occurs in parallel places. In several of the historical parts of scripture, for example, we have the same history, or, at least, many things tending to illustrate it. Thus the history of the reign of the kings of Judah and Israel, is the principal subject of the books of Kings and Chronicles, one of which often refers to, as well as explains, the other, and, by comparing them together, we shall find that one gives light to the other. Thus it is said, in 2 Kings xii. 2, that ‘Je-

^f See Psal. xvi. 1, &c. and cxxxiv.

^g See 2 Chron. xxxv. 25.

^h Lam. v. 16.

Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.' Here it is intimated that, after the death of Jehoiada, he did evil in the sight of the Lord. That he did so, however, is not particularly mentioned in this chapter, which principally insists on that part of his reign which was commendable. But if we compare it with 2 Chron. xxiv., we there have an account of his reign after the death of Jehoiada, how he 'set up idolatry,'ⁱ being instigated by his princes, who flattered him or 'made obeisance unto him;' how he disregarded the prophets sent to testify against these practices; and how he 'stoned Zechariah in the court of the house of the Lord,' for his faithful reproof and prophetic intimation of the consequence of his idolatry,—an act in which he showed the greatest ingratitude, and forgetfulness of the good things which had been done for him by his father, who set him on the throne. We have also an account of the time when the Syrians came up against him; how they overcame him with a small company of men; and how 'the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.'^k—Again, in the Book of Kings we have but a short history of the reign of Azariah, otherwise called Uzziah, and of his being 'smitten by the Lord, so that he was a leper until the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house.'^l But in 2 Chron. xxvi. there is a larger account of him, of his success in war, and of the honour and the riches which he gained by it; and there is also a particular account of the reason of the Lord's smiting him with leprosy,—namely, his invading a branch of the priest's office.—Again, in the history of the reign of Manasseh, in 2 Kings xxi., we have an account of only the vile and abominable part of it. But in 2 Chron. xxxiii. we have an account not only of his wickedness, but of his repentance, together with the affliction which occasioned it.^m

Moreover, when we read the prophetic writings, we must, for our better understanding them, compare them with the particular history of the reign of those kings in whose time they were written, and with the history of the state of the Jewish church, of their alliances or wars with neighbouring princes, and of the sins which they were guilty of, which gave occasion to their being sometimes insulted and overcome by them, till their ruin was completed in being carried captive into Babylon. Thus the seventh chapter of Isaiah gives an account of the attempt of Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, against Ahaz, and contains a prediction of their miscarriage in this attempt; it also foretells that the king of Assyria should be hired to assist Ahaz, but should, instead, deal deceitfully with him, so that he should deprive Judah of their ornaments, and impoverish them instead of being helpful to them. Now, of these matters we have a farther explanation in the history of Ahaz's reign, in 2 Kings xvi. and 2 Chron. xxviii.—Again, we ought to compare the account, in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Isaiah, of Sennacherib's invading Judah, and the blasphemous insult of his servant Rabshakeh, together with his defeat, and the remarkable hand of God which brought it about as an encouragement of Hezekiah's piety, with the historical account of the same occurrences, in 2 Kings xviii. and xix. and 2 Chron. xxxii.—Again, we must compare the psalms of David with his life, or with the state of the church, which is particularly referred to in some of them, and which may be very much illustrated by other scriptures which have relation to the same dispensations of providence, or contain an historical account of them. Those psalms, for example, which were penned on particular occasions, mentioned in the respective titles prefixed to them, will be better understood if we compare the subject of them with the history they refer to. Moreover, we shall often find that when the same thing is mentioned in different places of scripture, there is something added in one, which farther illustrates what is contained in the other. Thus, in the account we have of the life of Joseph, in Gen. xxxix. 20, it is said that he was 'put into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound;' and, in chap. xli. 14, it is said that he was kept in 'the dungeon,' which is the worst part of the prison. But the psalmist, speaking of the same matter, in Psal. cv. 18, adds that his 'feet were hurt with fetters,' and he was 'laid in irons;' and thus affords a farther illustration of the history of his troubles.—

ⁱ 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. ^k Verses 23, 24. ^l 2 Kings xv. 1—5. ^m 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12—19.

Again, we read in Numb. xi. 31, 32, of God's 'feeding Israel,' upon their murmuring in the desert for want of flesh, 'with quails in great abundance;' and the same event is mentioned in Psal. lxxviii. 27, where we have an account that these quails were a sort of 'feathered fowl,'—a fact which could not have been so well understood by the sense of the Hebrew word which we render quails.ⁿ We have also an account, in Exod. xvii. 6, of God's supplying them with 'water out of the rock in Horeb;' and if we compare what is there said with Psal. cv. 41, we shall find that this water issued thence in so large a stream, that it was like a river. The apostle Paul likewise gives farther light on the subject, when he says, speaking in a figurative way, that 'the rock followed them,'^o that is, the water which ran from it like a river, did not flow in a right line, but, by a continued miracle, changed its course, as they altered their stations, in their various removes from place to place in the wilderness; and he adds that God designed this event to be a type of Christ.

I might also observe that there many things in the life of David after his expulsion from Saul's court, which would argue him an usurper. He did not merely flee to secure his life, which, as a private person, he might lawfully do; but he raised a small army. Accordingly, it is said that 'every one that was in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men.'^p And Jonathan, who was heir-apparent to the crown, was forced to capitulate with him, and take an oath of him that he would grant him his life, concluding that he would be king after his father's death.^q Nor was Saul's jealousy, which was attended with rage amounting to a kind of distraction, altogether without ground; and he intimates as much when he tells him, 'Behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king.'^r Accordingly, in the following verses, he makes him 'swear to him, that he would not cut off his seed after him, or destroy his name out of his father's house.' Now, this conduct of David could hardly be justified, if we did not consider what we read in another part of scripture, that, before that time, God had taken away the kingdom from Saul, and ordered David to be anointed king in his stead,^s though he had not the actual possession of the kingdom till after Saul's death.

I might farther observe, that the accounts contained in the books of Moses of the ceremonial law, and the various rites and ordinances of divine service contained in it, and also many expressions in the Old Testament which refer to it, ought to be compared with several things which are recorded in the writings of the apostle Paul, particularly, in a very considerable part of his epistle to the Hebrews,^t in which we have an account of the signification of the ceremonial observances as ordained to be types of the gospel-dispensation. Indeed, there are many scriptures of the Old Testament, which will be better understood by comparing them with others which refer to them in the New. Thus, Isa. xlv. 23, 'Unto me every knee shall bow,' appears to be very agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour, in Phil. ii. 10.; and it is not only spoken of the divine honour which should be paid to him, but relates, in a peculiar manner, to that glory which all shall ascribe to him, when they stand before his tribunal. This appears by comparing the passage with Rom. xiv. 10, 11.—Again, when we read, in Isa. vi. 10, of God's sending the prophet to 'make the heart of the people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed;' it is not to be supposed that God is represented here as the author of their sin. This will plainly appear if we compare the passage with Matt. xiii. 15, where it is cited and farther explained: 'This people's heart is waxed fat, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes,' &c. In Acts xxviii. 26, 27, also it is referred to, and explained in the same sense, as charging their sin and the consequence of it upon themselves.

ⁿ The word is *קָנָה*, which being neither a root to any other word, nor derived from any other root, by which the sense of Hebrew words is generally known, nor found any where in scripture, excepting in those two or three places which refer to this particular dispensation of providence, it is a hard matter to determine the sense of it, without comparing these two scriptures together.

^o 1 Cor. x. 4.

^p 1 Sam. xxii. 2.

^q Chap. xx. 14, 15, compared with ver. 42.

^r 1 Sam. xxiv. 20.

^s Chap. xvi. 13.

^t See the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. v.—*r*.

inclusive, and 2 Cor. x. 1—6.

By this method of comparing the Old and New Testament together, we shall be led to see the beautiful harmony of scripture, and how its predictions have been accomplished; which will tend very much to establish our faith in the truth of the Christian religion founded on it. But this point having been insisted on elsewhere,^u we pass it over at present, and proceed to make another observation.

There are several places in the New Testament which, being compared together, will give light to one another. Thus, in the four evangelists, which contain the history of the life and death of Christ, some things are left out or but briefly hinted at in one of them, which are more largely insisted on in another. Thus we read, in Matt. xii. 14, 15, that 'the Pharisees went out and held a counsel against' our Saviour, 'how they might destroy him;' and that on that occasion 'he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.' But Mark,^x speaking concerning the same thing, intimates that the Herodians were joined with the Pharisees in this conspiracy; and that he 'withdrew himself to the sea,' namely, of Tiberias, where he ordered that 'a small ship should wait on him, lest the multitude should throng him.' We have also an account of several places whence they came, namely, 'Galilee, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon,' so that a great part of them were Gentiles. Now, these additional particulars give light to what follows in Matt. xii. 18, 21, where it is intimated that the occurrence was an accomplishment of what was 'foretold by the prophet Esaias,' that Christ should 'show judgment to the Gentiles,' and that, 'in his name the Gentiles should trust.' Hence, he wrought miracles to convince them that he was the Messias.—Again, it is said, in Matt. xiii. 12, 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.' Here some will be ready to inquire how that which a man hath can be said to be taken away, when he is supposed to have nothing; or how a person can be said to lose that which he never had. But if we compare the passage in Matthew with a parallel scripture, in Luke viii. 18, we shall find it there said, 'Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have;' or as it is in the margin, 'that which he thinketh he hath.' Now, though a man cannot lose grace, who had it not; yet an hypocrite, who seems to have it, may lose that which he supposeth himself to have.—This method of comparing the four evangelists together, is attempted by several divines. Among these, a late writer, who is deservedly esteemed by all the Reformed churches,^y thinks that the inscription on the cross of Christ can hardly be determined, without comparing what is said of it by all the four evangelists. Mark says the words were, 'The King of the Jews;'^z Luke says they were, 'This is the King of the Jews;'^a Matthew adds another word, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;'^b and John says the inscription was, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'^c Hence, by comparing them all together, and supplying those words from one which are left out by others, we must conclude that the inscription was, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

Again, as the Acts of the Apostles contains a brief history of the first planting of the gospel-church, and in particular, of the travels and ministry of the apostle Paul, it ought to be compared with some things occasionally mentioned in Paul's epistles, which will give farther light to its statements. Thus the apostle says, in 1 Cor. xv. 8, 'Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time;' and speaks of himself, in ver. 9, as 'the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle; because he persecuted the church of God.' Now, this account of himself ought to be compared with Acts ix. 1—6, which gives an account of him as a persecutor before his conversion, and shows how our Saviour was seen of him. By comparing the two passages, it appears that Christ's being seen of him is not to be understood in the same sense as that in which he was seen by the rest of the apostles before his ascension into heaven; but of his being seen of him after

^u See Sect. 'Proofs that the Scriptures are inspired,' under Quest. iv. ^x Mark iii. 7, et seq.

^y See Lightfoot's Harmony of the Four Evangelists; and his Harmony of the New Testament, vol. i. page 268.

^z Mark xv. 26.

^a Luke xxiii. 38.

^b Matt. xxvii. 37.

^c John xix. 19.

his ascension, when, on the occasion mentioned in the latter passage, he appeared to him. If, again, we examine 1 Cor. xi. 1, we shall find that Paul considers this sight of Jesus as having been a necessary qualification for the apostleship. Hence, when he speaks of himself as 'born out of due time,' he means that he was called to the apostleship, and qualified for it, out of due time; that is, not at the same time in which the other apostles were, but by this extraordinary dispensation of providence.—Again, when the apostle, in 1 Thess. ii. 2, speaks of his having been 'shamefully entreated at Philippi,' his statement will be better understood if we compare it with Acts xvi. 16, 21, 22, et seq. And when he tells the Thessalonians, in the following words, 'We were bold in our God, to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention,' his words should be compared with Acts xvii. 1, et seq. Many instances of a similar nature might be given, from which the usefulness of comparing one scripture with another would farther appear. But, I design what I have stated as only a specimen, to assist us in the application of this direction; which a diligent inquirer into the sense of scripture will be able to make farther improvements upon.

5. In order to our understanding the scriptures, we must take notice of the several figurative modes of speaking which are used in them. For example, the part is often put for the whole.^d Thus the soul, which is one constituent part of man, is sometimes put for the whole man; as in Gen. xvi. 26, where we read of 'the souls' that came with Jacob into Egypt. And, in Rom. xii. 1, the body is put for the whole man: 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies,' that is, yourselves, 'a living sacrifice to God.' So the blood of Christ, which is often spoken of in scripture as that by which we are redeemed, justified, and saved, is to be taken for the whole of his obedience and sufferings, both in life and in death; to which our salvation is to be ascribed, as well as to the effusion of his blood.

Again, the thing containing, is put for that which is contained in it.^e Thus the cup in the Lord's supper, is put for the wine.^f And the thing signified is put for that which is the sign of it. Thus when it is said, 'This is my body;' ^g the meaning is, this bread is a sign of my body, namely, of the sufferings endured in it.

Again, places are, by way of anticipation, called by those names which, in reality, were not given them, or which they were not commonly known by till some time after. Thus it is said that, as soon as Israel had passed over Jordan, they 'encamped in Gilgal,'^h that is, in the place which was afterwards so called; for we read that it was called Gilgal because there they were circumcised, and so 'the reproach of Egypt,' occasioned by the neglect of that ordinance, 'was rolled away.'ⁱ Again, it is said, 'The kings that came up against Sodom,' when Lot was taken prisoner, 'had smitten all the country of the Amalekites.'^k Yet the country which was afterwards known by that name, could not be so called at that time; since Amalek, from whom it took its name, was not born till some ages after, he being of the posterity of Esau.^l

Further, the time past or present is often, especially in the prophetic writings, put for the time to come. This mode of writing denotes the certainty of the performance of the prediction, as much as though it were actually accomplished. Thus it is said, 'He,' that is, our Saviour, 'is despised and rejected of men; he hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions.'^m And elsewhere, 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.'ⁿ And, 'Unto us a child is born,'^o &c.

Further, one of the senses is sometimes put for another. Thus when it is said, 'I turned to see the voice that spake to me,'^p seeing is put for hearing, or for understanding the meaning of the voice which spake.

Again, positive assertions are sometimes taken in a comparative sense. Thus God says to Samuel, The people in asking a king, 'have not rejected thee, but me;'^q that is, they have east more contempt on me than they have on thee, or they have offered a greater affront to my government who condescended to be their

^d This is called synecdoche.

^h Josh. iv. 19.

^m Isa. liii. 4, 5.

^e This is called a metonymy.

ⁱ Chap. v. 9.

ⁿ Chap. ix. 2.

^f 1 Cor. xi. 25.

^k Gen. xiv. 7.

^o Ver. 6.

^g Ver. 24.

^l Chap. xxxvi. 12.

^p Rev. i. 12.

^q 1 Sam. viii. 7.

king, though they have been uneasy under thine administration as appointed to be their judge. So in Psal. li. 4, David says, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.' Yet he had sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba, having murdered the one, and tempted the other to commit adultery with him; he had sinned against the army, whom he occasioned to fall in battle, in execution of the orders he gave Joab, with a design to destroy Uriah. But though he had sinned against these parties, he says, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;' that is, the greatest aggravation of my sin is, that it contains rebellion against thee. Elsewhere also God says, 'I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;' that is, more than sacrifice.

Again, there are several hyperbolical ways of speaking in scripture, whereby more is expressed than what is generally understood. Thus the vessel in the temple in which things were washed, which was ten cubits from one brim to the other, is called 'a molten sea;'^s because it contained a great quantity of water; though, indeed, it was very small, if compared with the dimensions of the sea. In 1 Kings x. 27, it is said that 'Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones; and cedars as the sycamore-trees, which are in the vale for abundance.' Now silver was not, strictly speaking, as plentiful as stones; but the language implies that there were vast treasures of it heaped up by the king and many of his subjects, and that there was no lack of it on the part of any one. In Judges xx. 16, it is said there were 'some of the Benjamites left-handed, every one of whom could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss.' But this statement means only that they had an uncommon expertness in this matter. When, again, we read of some of the cities in the land of Canaan, that were 'great, and walled up to heaven;'^t the meaning only denotes that their walls were very high. In 1 Kings i. 40, it is said that, on occasion of Solomon's being anointed king, 'the people rejoiced with great joy; so that the earth rent with the sound of them.' Here the meaning is only that the shouts of the people were so great, that if the concussion of the air made by such means could have rent the earth, they would have done it.

Further, we sometimes find ironical expressions, and sarcasms used in scripture, with a design to expose the wickedness and folly of men. Thus, when our first parents sinned by adhering to the suggestions of Satan, who told them that they 'should be as gods, knowing good and evil;'^u God says, in an ironical way, 'Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,'^x &c. So the prophet Elijah exposes Baal's worshippers, and Micaiah, Ahab's false prophets, by using a sarcastic way of speaking.^y Job uses the same figurative way of speaking, when he reproves the bitter invectives and false reasonings of his friends: 'No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.'^z Solomon uses the same way of address, when he says, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.'^a The man who trusts in his own righteousness for justification, is also exposed in the same way, 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.'^b And when our Saviour says to his disciples, having found them asleep, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners,'^c it is plain, from the following words, that he uses this figurative way of speaking; for he immediately adds, without an irony, 'Rise, let us be going.' Some think also that this is the method of speaking which our Saviour makes use of, when he reproves his disciples for the fond conceit they had that his kingdom was of this world, contending sometimes among themselves who should be greatest in it. Referring to that conceit, he bids them make provision for war, and take care to secure those two things which are necessary for it, money and arms. 'He that hath a purse,' says he, 'let him take it; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'^d They did not, indeed, imme-

r Hos. vi. 6. s 1 Kings vii. 23.

y 1 Kings xviii. 27; chap. xxii. 15.

c Ma-t. xxvi. 45, 46.

t Deut. i. 28.

z Job xii. 2.

d Luke xxii. 36.

u Gen. iii. 5.

a Eccl. xi. 9.

x Verse 22.

b Isa. i. 11.

diately perceive that he spake in an ironical way; and therefore replied, 'Lord, behold here are two swords.'^e He then said to them, still carrying on the irony, 'It is enough.' Hence, whether they understood his meaning or not, it seems to have been this: "If you are disposed to contend who shall be greatest, as though my kingdom were of a temporal nature, and to be erected and maintained by force of arms, do you think you have a sufficient treasure to hire forces to join with you, or buy arms for that purpose? or, do you imagine that you have courage enough to attack the Roman empire, and gain it by force? You say, you have two swords; can you suppose that these are enough? What a ludicrous and indifferent figure would you make, if you expected to come off conquerors by this means! No, they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; for my kingdom is not of this world. All the advantages and honours which you are to expect in it, are of a spiritual nature." This seems to be the meaning of this scripture, rather than that which the Papists generally acquiesce in, namely, that by 'the two swords,' are meant the civil and ecclesiastical, both of which, as they pretend, are put into the Pope's hands.

Again, the scripture often makes use of a figurative way of speaking, generally called an *hendyadis*, whereby one complex idea is expressed by two words. This figure is very common in the Hebrew language. Thus when God promises his people that he would give them 'an expected end,'^f intending hereby their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; the words, if literally translated, ought to be rendered, as is observed in the margin, 'an end and expectation.' Our translators, however, were apprized that there is such a figurative way of speaking contained in them; and therefore they render them, 'an expected end.' This figure is sometimes used in the New Testament. Thus our Saviour tells his disciples, 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom';^g that is, I will give you ability to express yourselves with so much wisdom, 'that all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay it.' Some think, that the same way of speaking is used in John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'; that is, except a man be born of the Holy Spirit, or regenerated, a work which is signified by being born of water, he cannot, &c.

Finally, nothing is more common than for the Holy Ghost, in scripture, to make use of metaphors. These are a very elegant way of representing things, by comparing them with and illustrating them by others, borrowing from others such illustrations as add a very considerable beauty to the things illustrated. Thus repentance and godly sorrow, together with the blessed privileges which shall hereafter follow them, are compared to sowing and reaping. 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'^h Thus, too, the prophet, by a metaphor taken from husbandry, sets forth the labour and pains which Israel had taken in sin, and exhorts them to be as industrious in pursuing what would turn to a better account. He says that they had 'ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity'; and advises them to 'sow to themselves in righteousness, and reap in mercy.'ⁱ This, he adds, they should do by 'seeking the Lord'; and 'it is time,' says he, 'to seek him, till he come and rain righteousness upon you'; which is necessary to a plenteous harvest of blessings, which you may hope for in so doing. He also reproves their adulteries by a metaphor taken from 'an oven heated by the baker';^k and their hypocrisy by another taken from 'a cake not turned';^l and their being weakened and almost ruined hereby, he compares to the 'gray hairs' of those who are bowed down under the infirmities of age;^m and for their cowardice and seeking help from other nations, and not from God, he calls them 'a silly dove without an heart.'ⁿ We may observe that there is often a chain of metaphors in the same paragraph. Of this kind is that elegant description of old age, sickness, and death, which Solomon gives in exhorting persons to 'remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened.'^o By these expressions it is probable he

^e Luke xxii. 38.

ⁱ Hos. x. 12, 13.

^a Hos. vii. 11.

^f Jer. xxix. 11.

^k Chap. vii. 4.

^o Eccles. xii. 1—6.

^g Luke xxi. 15.

^l Verse 8.

^h Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6.

^m Verse 9.

intends the impairing of the intellect, the loss of those sprightly parts which once they had, or of the memory and judgment; on which account men are sometimes said to outlive themselves. He speaks also of 'the keepers of the house trembling,' that is, the hands and arms, designed for the defence of the body, being seized with paralytic disorders; 'the strong men bowing themselves,' that is, those parts which are designed to support the body being weakened, and needing a staff to bear themselves up; 'the grinders ceasing because they are few,' that is, the loss of teeth; 'they that look out of the windows being darkened,' that is, a decay of sight; 'rising up at the voice of the bird,' that is, their loss of one of the main props of nature, namely, sleep, so that they may rise early in the morning, when the birds begin to sing, because their beds will not afford them rest. And 'the daughters of music being brought low,' denotes a decay of the voice and hearing, and being not affected with those sounds which were once most delightful. 'The almond-tree flourishing,' plainly signifies the hoary head. 'The grasshopper' being 'a burden,' is either a proverbial phrase importing a want of courage, strength, and resolution, to bear the smallest pressures; or, as others understand it, their stooping, when bowed down with old age. 'The silver cord loosed,' or 'the golden bowl broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,' signifies a decay of the animal spirits, a laxation of the nerves, irregular circulation of the blood, or the universal stoppage of it; when the frame of nature is broken, and man 'returns to the dust.'^p In the New Testament there are several metaphors used. Some of these are taken from the Isthmian and Olympic games, practised by the Greeks and Romans. Thus the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to 'a race,' in which 'many run,' but do not all 'receive the prize.'^q He alludes also^r to another exercise, namely, wrestling; and recommends temperance as what was practised by the wrestlers as a means for their obtaining the crown. He likewise^s uses a metaphor, taken from another of the games, namely, fighting in hope of victory; by which^t he illustrates his zeal in the discharge of his ministry. In another place,^u he speaks of the Christian race, and the necessity of 'laying aside every weight,' namely, allowed sins, which would retard our course, or hinder us in the way to heaven. Again, he speaks of himself both as a minister and a Christian, as 'forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, and pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;'^v where he plainly alludes to the posture, industry, and earnestness of those who run in a race. Elsewhere also^x he speaks of the difficulties, temptations, and opposition which believers are exposed to in the Christian life, and advises them to 'put on the whole armour of God;' and so carries on the metaphor or allegory, by alluding to the various pieces of armour which soldiers make use of when engaged in battle, to illustrate the methods we ought to take that we may come off conquerors at last.

6. It will be very useful, in order to our understanding scripture, for us to know some things relating to the different forms of civil government, and the various changes made in it, among the Jews and other nations with whom they were conversant. At first we find that distinct families had the administration of civil affairs committed to them, and that the heads of them were, as it were, the chief magistrates, who had, in some instances, the exercise of civil power, especially if it did not interfere with that of the country in which they lived. Some think, indeed, that it extended to the punishing of capital crimes with death; and that Judah, who was the head of a branch of Jacob's family, when he passed this sentence concerning Tamar, 'Bring her forth, and let her be burnt,'^y did it as a civil magistrate. But if it be not to be deemed a rash and unjustifiable expression in him, when he says, 'Let her be brought forth, and burnt,' we must suppose the meaning to be, 'Let her first be confined till she is delivered of her child, and then tried by the civil magistrate, the consequence of which will be, her being burnt, when found guilty of the adultery charged upon her.' It hence does not appear that the heads of families, when sojourning in other countries, had a power distinct

^p See more of this in an ingenious discourse on this subject, by Smith, in Solomon's Portraiture of Old Age. ^q 1 Cor. ix. 24. ^r Verse 25. ^s Verse 26. ^t Heb. xii. 1.

^u Phil. iii. 13, 14.

^x Eph. vi. 11—16.

^y Gen. xxxviii. 24.

from that of the government under which they lived, to punish offenders with death; though I think, it is beyond dispute that they had a government in their own families which extended, in many respects, to civil affairs, as well as enforced an obligation to observe those religious duties which God required. It may be farther observed that this government extended so far that the patriarchs, or heads of families, had sometimes a power of making war, or of entering into confederacies with neighbouring princes for their own safety, or for recovering their rights when invaded. Thus when Lot and the Sodomites were taken prisoners by the four kings who came up against them, we read^z that Abraham called in the assistance of some of his neighbours with whom he was in confederacy, and 'armed his trained servants, three hundred and eighteen, born in his house,' and rescued Lot and the men of Sodom from the hands of those who had taken them prisoners.

We have little more light as to this matter, so long as the government continued domestic, and the church was in the condition of sojourners. But when they were increased to a great nation, their civil as well as religious government was settled, by divine direction, under the hand of Moses in the wilderness. The first form of it was a Theocracy. God gave them laws in an immediate way; condescended to satisfy them, as to some things which they inquired of him about; gave them particular intimations how they should manage their affairs of war and peace; and appeared for them in giving them victory over their enemies, in a very extraordinary and sometimes miraculous way. But besides this great honour which God put on them, he established a form of government among them, under which they were divided into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens;^a all of which divisions had their respective captains or governors, who are sometimes styled 'the nobles of the children of Israel.'^b These governors were generally heads of considerable families among them; which were also divided in the same way, into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, in proportion to their largeness. Thus Gideon, speaking of his family,^c calls it, as the Hebrew word signifies, 'his thousand.' In the same manner, too, their armies were divided, when engaged in war. Thus when Jesse sent David with a present into the army to his brethren, he bade him deliver it to 'the captain of their thousand';^d who was the same description of officer whom, in our modern way of speaking, we call a commanding officer over a regiment of soldiers. Again, when David's soldiers went out to war against Absalom, it is said, 'They came out by hundreds, and by thousands';^e each distinct company or regiment having its commanding officer. Thus the government was settled as to civil and military affairs, in such a way that the head of the respective division had a power of judging in lesser matters. But as there were some affairs of the greatest importance to be transacted in the form of their government, by divine direction, God appointed seventy men of the children of Israel, to assist Moses in those matters in which they had more immediately to do with him. Accordingly, he 'gave them the Spirit,'^f that is, the extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit, whereby he communicated his mind and will to them. This was the origin of the Sanhedrim; and those who composed that body had a power of judging in civil matters, throughout all the ages of the church, till the Jews were made tributary to the Romans. But after that period, they became as vile and contemptible as they had before been honourable in the eyes of just and good men. This appears from their tumultuous and unprecedented behaviour in the trial of our Saviour, and from the malicious prosecutions set on foot by them against the apostles, without any pretence or form of law.

After the death of Joshua, and the elders who survived him, there was an alteration in the form of government, occasioned by the oppression to which the Israelites were liable from their enemies; who insulted and vexed them, and sometimes plundered them of their substance. Then God raised up judges, who first procured peace for them by success in war, and afterwards governed them, though without the character or ensigns of royal dignity. This government not being successive, the

z Gen. xiv. 13, 14.

c Judges vi. 15.

f Numb. xi. 16, 17.

a Exod. xviii. 21; Deut. i. 15.

d 1 Sam. xvii. 18; and chap. xviii. 13.

b Exod. xxiv. 11.

e 2 Sam. xviii. 4.

Israelites were, on the death of these respective judges, brought into great confusion, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes, till another judge was raised up, as some future emergency required it. Thus the posture of their affairs continued, as the apostle observes, 'about the space of four hundred and fifty years;' ^g and then it was altered, when, through their unsettled temper, they desired a king, in conformity to the custom of the nations round about them. Though their request was displeasing to God, yet he granted it; ^h and so the government became regal. Then followed a succession of kings, set over the whole nation, till the division between Judah and Israel; when they became two distinct kingdoms, and so continued till their respective captivity. These things being duly considered, will give great light to several things contained in scripture; especially as to what relates to the civil affairs of the church of God.

But it will be necessary also that we take a view of the government of other nations, with whom they were conversant. We read of almost as many kings in scripture as there were cities in several of those countries which lay round about the Israelites. Thus, ⁱ we read of many dukes and kings, whose power was much the same, who descended from Esau. These had very small dominions, each of them being, as is probable, the chief governor of one city, or at most of a little tract of land round about it. Indeed, except the Assyrian and other monarchies which were of a very large extent, and had none, under that character, who stood in competition with them while they subsisted, all other kingdoms were very small. Hence, four kings were obliged to enter into a confederacy, to make war with Sodom and the four neighbouring cities, which a very inconsiderable army might, without much difficulty, have subdued. ^k One of these four kings, indeed, is called 'king of nations;' but he is called so, not because he had large dominions, but because he was the chief governor of a mixed people from divers nations, who were settled together in one distinct colony. The king of Shinar there spoken of, too, is not the king of Babylon, who was too potent a prince to have stood in need of others to join with him in such an expedition; but he was a petty king who reigned in some city near Babylon, and was tributary to the Assyrian empire. These four kings, with all their forces, were so few in number that Abraham was not afraid to attack them; which he did with success.—Again, we read, that in Joshua's time, the kings in the land of Canaan, whom he subdued, had each of them very small dominions, consisting of but one capital city, with a few villages round about it. We read of thirty-one kings who reigned in that country, which was not so big as a fourth part of the kingdom of England. ^l Afterwards most of these kingdoms were swallowed up by the Assyrian empire. Accordingly, the king of Assyria, as Rabshakeh boasts, had entirely conquered the kings of Hamath, Arphad, Gozan, and Haran, with several others. ^m These had very small dominions, and therefore were easily subdued by forces so much superior to any which they could raise. Egypt, indeed, was more formidable; and therefore we often read in scripture of Israel's having recourse to them for help, and of their being blamed for trusting in them more than in God. In Arabia, also, there were some kings who had large dominions, as appears by the vast armies that they raised. Thus 'Zerah the Ethiopian came forth against Asa, with a thousand thousand men.' ⁿ Yet, the church of God was able to stand its ground; for whether the neighbouring kings were many of them confederated against them, or the armies they raised exceedingly numerous, like the sand on the sea-shore, they had safety and protection as well as success in war, from the care and blessing of providence. Of these matters we have an account in the history of scripture relating to them.

7. It will be of some advantage, in order to our understanding the sense of scripture, for us to inquire into the meaning of those civil and religious offices and characters by which several persons are described, both in the Old and in the New Testament. As to the priests and Levites, we have had occasion frequently to insist on their call and office. Among the former, one was styled 'high priest.' He not only was the chief minister in holy things under the Jewish dispensation; but

^g Acts xiii. 20.
^l Josh. xii.

^h 1 Sam. viii. 5—7.
^m 2 Kings xix. 12, 13.

ⁱ Gen. xxxvi.
ⁿ 2 Chron. xiv. 9.

^k Chap. xiv. 1, &c.

presided over the other priests in all those things which respected the temple-service. There was also another priest who had pre-eminence over his brethren, and was next to the high priest in office. He seems to be referred to in 2 Kings xxv. 18, where we read of 'Seraiah, the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest.' This officer is not often mentioned in scripture; but is frequently spoken of by Jewish writers. They call him, as the author of the Chaldee paraphrase does on the text just quoted, the Sagan. Some think that this office was first instituted in Numb. iii. 32, where we read that Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, was to be 'chief over the chief of the Levites, and to have the oversight of them that kept the charge of the sanctuary.' Elsewhere, also, we read of Zadok and Abiathar being by way of eminence, 'priests at the same time;'^o by which, it is probable, we are to understand, as many expositors do, that the one was the high priest, and the other the Sagan; who was to perform the office which belonged to the high priest in all its branches, if the high priest should happen to be incapacitated for it. Besides these, there were others who were styled 'chief priests.' These were the heads of their respective classes, and presided over them when they came to Jerusalem, to minister in their courses. There was also the president of the Sanhedrim, who is generally reckoned one of the chief priests. Moreover, when any one was, by the arbitrary will of their governors, in the degenerate and declining state of the Jewish church, deposed from the high priesthood, merely to make way for another favourite to enjoy that honour, he was, though divested of his office, nevertheless called 'chief priest.' This fact will give light to several scriptures in the New Testament, in which we read of many chief priests at the same time.^p As to the Levites, they were not only appointed to be the high priest's ministers in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple; but many of them were engaged in other offices. Some instructed the people, in the respective cities where they dwelt, who were to resort to them for that purpose; or in synagogues, erected for this branch of public worship. Others were employed as judges in determining civil or ecclesiastical matters.

Again, we often read in scripture of scribes. These were of two sorts. Some were employed only in civil matters. We sometimes read of one person, in particular, who was appointed to be the king's scribe. Thus in David's reign, we read of Shemaiah the scribe; in Hezekiah's, of Shebna.^q This seems to have been a civil officer, not much unlike a secretary of state among us; and we seldom find mention made of more than one scribe at a time, except in Solomon's reign, when there were two.^r But we often read, also, of scribes who were engaged in other works. It is generally supposed that many of them were employed in transcribing the whole or some parts of scripture, for the use of those who employed them in that work and compensated them for it,—a work which was necessary for the propagating of religion in those ages in which printing was not known. Moreover, there were others who explained the law to the people. Thus Ezra is styled, 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses.'^s This was an honourable and useful employment, faithfully managed by him and many others, in the best ages of the church. But, in our Saviour's time, there were scribes who pretended to expound the law and instruct the people, whose doctrines were very contrary to the mind of the Holy Ghost in Moses' writings, and whose way of preaching was very empty and unprofitable. Hence, it is said that our Lord 'taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'^t

Further, we sometimes read in the New Testament of 'lawyers,' against whom our Saviour denounces woes, for opposing him and his gospel. This is supposed by some to be only a different name given to the scribes. For they practised the law in public courts of judicature, and pleaded causes in the Sanhedrim, or taught in their schools or religious assemblies; and both of these things were done by the scribes. The evangelist Matthew, too, speaks of 'a lawyer' who asked our Saviour a question, 'Which is the great commandment?'^u while Mark, mentioning the

^o 2 Sam. xv. 35; xix. 11.
2 Kings xviii. 18.

^r 1 Kings iv. 4.

^p See Luke iii. 2; Mark xiv. 53.

^s Ezra vii. 6.

^t Matt. vii. 29.

^q 1 Chron. xxiv. 6;
^u Chap. xxii. 35, 36.

same thing, calls the person 'one of the scribes.'^x The same thing, in substance, seems to be intended by both evangelists. Some suppose, indeed, that there was a difference between the lawyers and scribes, from its being said that when our Saviour had been reproving the scribes and Pharisees, 'one of the lawyers said unto him; Thus saying, thou reproachest us also,'^y where the lawyers speak as though they were distinct from the scribes. Yet it is evident that, however they might be distinguished from them in other respects, they agreed with them as engaged in expounding the law; and are said, in the performance of this work, to have 'laden men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne,' which they themselves 'would not touch with one of their fingers.'

As for those civil officers whom we read of in the Old Testament before the captivity, especially in David and Solomon's reign, they were either such as were set over the tribute, the principal of which was at the head of the treasury,^z or such as were employed under them, to see that the taxes were duly levied and paid. The latter are called 'receivers.'^a Others were employed in keeping and adjusting the public records. Of these one was the chief; who, by way of eminence, is called 'the recorder.' Others were appointed to manage the king's domestic affairs; of whom the chief was 'set over the household.'^b Another is said to have been 'set over the host.'^c He either had the chief command of the army, or was appointed to muster and determine who should go to war or be excused from it. There is still another officer whom we read of once in scripture, namely, he who 'counted the towers';^d whose business seems to have been to survey and keep the fortifications in repair. But these not being so frequently mentioned in scripture as others, we pass them over, and proceed more especially to consider some characters of persons which we meet with in the New Testament.

There was one sort of officers who were concerned in exacting the public revenues, after the Jews were made tributary to the Roman empire. These are called publicans. The chief of them were generally persons of great honour and substance, who sometimes farmed a branch of the revenue; and were, for the most part, Romans of noble extraction. We have an account of them in Cicero,^e and other heathen writers; but there is no mention of them in scripture. This honourable post was never conferred on the Jews. Yet we read of Zaccheus, who is said to have been 'one of the chief among the publicans,' though a Jew.^f The meaning is, that he was the chief officer in a particular port, and had other publicans under him; whose business was constantly to attend at the ports, and take an account of the taxes which were to be paid there by those of whom they were exacted. Of the latter sort was Matthew, who is called 'the publican,' that is, one of the lowest officers concerned in the revenue.^g These were usually very profligate in their morals, and inclined to oppress those of whom they received taxes, probably to gain advantage to themselves, and were universally hated by the Jews.

There was another sort of men, often mentioned in the New Testament, who made the greatest pretensions to religion, but were most remote from it, and are justly branded with the character of hypocrites,—namely, the Pharisees, who made themselves popular by their external show of piety. There is not, indeed, the least hint of there having been such a sect amongst the Jews before the captivity; though, it is true, the prophet Isaiah^h speaks of a sort of people who much resembled them, who said, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.' From this passage it seems that there were some of similar principles in Isaiah's day; unless we suppose that the passage had its accomplishment when the sect of the Pharisees appeared in the world in a following age. The time when they appeared was

x Mark xii. 28.

y Luke xi. 44, 45.

z 1 Kings iv. 6.

a Isa. xxxiii. 18.

b 2 Kings xviii. 18.

c 1 Kings iv. 4.

d Isa. xxxiii. 18.

e Vid. Cic. in Orat. pro Planc. *florem Equitum Romanorum ornamentum civitatis, firmamentum reipublicæ publicanorum ordine contineri.* And in his oration, ad Quintum Fratrem, he has many things concerning the dignity of the publicans, and their advantage to the commonwealth. He says, '*Si Publicanis advessemur ordinem de nobis optime meritum, et per nos cum republica conjunctum, et a nobis, et a republica disjungimus.*' And in his familiar Epistles, lib. xix. Epist. x. he calls them, '*Ordinem sibi semper commendatissimum;*' et ad Atticum, lib. vii. Epist. vii. he says, '*Cæsari amicissimos fuisse Publicanos.*'

f Luke xix. 2.

g Matt. x. 3, compared with chap. ix. 9.

h Isa. lxxv. 5.

not long after the reign of Alexander the Great,ⁱ between two and three hundred years before our Saviour's time. They are generally described in scripture, as pretending to be more expert than all others in the knowledge of the law ; but, in reality, making it void, by establishing those oral traditions which were contrary to its true intent and meaning. They are described also as setting up their own righteousness, and depending on the performance of some lesser duties of the law, as that from which they expected a right to eternal life. These were the greatest enemies, in their conduct, as well as their doctrines, to Christ and his gospel.

There was another sect who joined with the Pharisees in persecuting and opposing our Saviour ; though otherwise they did not in the least accord with them. These were the Sadducees, who appeared in the world about the same time as the Pharisees. They were men generally reputed as profligate in their morals ; and, for that reason, they were as much hated by the common people, as the Pharisees were caressed by them. They adhered to the philosophy of Epicurus ; and took occasion from it, as they are said in scripture^k to have done, to deny the resurrection, angels, and spirits. It is true they did not desire to be thought irreligious, though they were really so ; yet our Saviour describes them, as well as the Pharisees, as hypocrites and inveterate enemies to his gospel.

There was another sort of people, sometimes mentioned in the New Testament, namely, the Samaritans. These separated from the Jews, out of a private pique, and built a distinct temple on mount Gerizim ;^l and for doing this they were excommunicated by the Jews, and universally hated, so that there was no intercourse between them,^m especially in those things in which one might be said to be obliged to another. They did very much corrupt the worship of God ; so that Christ charges them with 'worshipping they knew not what.'ⁿ It is also observed concerning them, that after the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria, they who were left in the land 'feared not the Lord, and he sent lions amongst them.'^o On this occasion, a priest was dismissed by the king of Assyria, under pretence of 'instructing them in the manner of the God of the land ;' and he erected a strange medley of religion, consisting partly of those corruptions which had been practised by the Israelites for some ages past, and partly of the heathen idolatry which they brought from Assyria. On this account it is said, 'They feared the Lord, and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.'^p

There is another sort of men, mentioned in the New Testament, called Herodians. These seem to have been a political rather than a religious sect. Some of the fathers, indeed, think that they were so called because they complimented Herod with the character of the Messiah ;^q who, as they supposed, would be a very flourishing prince, and would reign over them, according to the ancient prediction of the patriarch Jacob, after 'the sceptre was departed from Judah.' But this seems to be a very improbable conjecture ; for Herod the Great was dead, before we read any thing of the Herodians in scripture. Besides, the Jews had an opinion, about this time, that the Messiah should never die.^r The most probable opinion is, that these Herodians were, in their origin, the favourites and courtiers of Herod, and disposed to adopt any alterations which he was inclined to make in the religious or civil affair of the Jews.^s From what is said concerning them in scripture, it is supposed that they were, for the most part, Sadducees. For, if we compare Matt. xvi. 6, with Mark viii. 15, we shall find that our Saviour warns his disciples on occasion of their having 'forgot to take bread,' to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,' as the former evangelist expresses it, and 'of the leaven of

ⁱ See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. ix. And we have an account of their pride and insolence in the same author, chap. xviii., and of the great disturbance they made in civil governments, if chief magistrates did not please them.

^k Acts xxiii. 8.

^l See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. viii.

^m John iv. 9.

ⁿ Verse 22.

^o 2 Kings xvii. 25.

^p Verse 33.

and Epiphanius, in Hær. cap. xx.

^q See Tertull. in præscrip. adv. Hær. cap. xlv.

^r John xii. 34.

^s That Herod was disposed to make alterations in the Jews' religion, by adding to it a mixture of several rites and ceremonies, taken from the heathen, is affirmed by some. See Cunæus de Rep. Hæbr. lib. i. cap. xvi., who quotes Josephus as saying that he altered the ancient laws of their country.

Herod,' that is, the Herodians, as it is in the latter. Now, though these Herodians, or court parasites, might take their rise in the reign of Herod the Great; yet a party of men succeeded them who held the same principles, and were disposed to compliment their governors with their civil and religious rights. These, however, more especially distinguished themselves, by their propagating principles of loyalty among the people. While the Jews, under a pretence that they were a free nation, were very unwilling to give tribute to Cæsar,—though they would not venture their lives, as Judas of Galilee and some others had done, by refusing it; these Herodians laid it down as an article of their faith, that they ought to pay tribute to Cæsar. Hence, when they came with this question to our Saviour, 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?'^t he soon discovered their hypocrisy, and knew the design of their question, as he might easily do from their being Herodians. Thus concerning the various characters of persons mentioned in scripture, as subservient to our right understanding of it.

8. After all these helps for understanding the sense of scripture, there is one more which is universally to be observed; namely, that no sense is to be given of any text, but what is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and has a tendency to advance the divine perfections, stain the pride of all flesh in the sight of God, and promote practical godliness in all its branches. Scripture must be explained agreeably to the analogy of faith. It is supposed that there is something we depend on, which we can prove to be the faith of scripture, or demonstrably founded upon it. This we are bound to adhere to; otherwise we must be charged with scepticism, and concluded not to know where to set our feet in matters of religion. Now, so far as our faith in the summary and assured view of divine truth is founded on scripture, every sense we give of a text must be agreeable to it; otherwise we do as it were suppose that the word of God in one place destroys what in another it establishes, which would be a great reflection on that which is the standard and rule of our faith. I do not hereby mean, that our sentiments are to be a rule of faith to others; any farther than as they are evidently contained in scripture, or deduced from it. Yet that which we believe, thinking it to be the sense of scripture, is so far a rule to us that, whatever sense we give of any other scripture, must be agreeable to it; or else we must be content to acknowledge that we were mistaken in some of those things which we called articles of faith as founded on scripture.

Again, no sense given of scripture must be contrary to the divine perfections. Thus, when human passions are ascribed to God, such as grief, fear, desire, wrath, fury, indignation, &c., they are not to be explained as when the same passions are ascribed to men, in which sense they argue weakness and imperfection. And when any phrase of scripture seems to represent him as defective in power, as 'Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?'^u we are to understand it as a charge that would be unjustly brought against God, if he did not appear in behalf of his people, by those who are disposed to reproach and find fault with the dispensations of his providence. But as we have taken occasion, in explaining many scriptures and doctrines founded upon them, to apply this rule, I shall content myself at present with having merely mentioned it.

Further, we are to explain scripture in such a way that it may have a tendency to promote practical godliness in all its branches; the promotion of which is the main end and design of scripture. Many instances might be given in which this rule is to be applied. When, for example, we are said 'not to be under the law, but under grace,'^x we are not to understand the language as meaning that we are discharged from an obligation to yield obedience to whatever God commands, but as denoting our having been delivered either from the condemning sentence of the law, or from the ceremonial law, to which the gospel-dispensation, which is a display of the grace of God, is always opposed. Again, when it is said, 'Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?'^y we are not to understand that there is any danger of our being too holy or strict in the performance of religious duties; but we are to view the passage as

^t Matt. xxii. 17^u Jer. xiv. 9.^x Rom. vii. 14.^y Eccl. vii. 16.

forbidding an hypocritical appearing to be more righteous than we are, or an entertaining of a proud and vain-glorious conceit of our own righteousness because we perform some duties of religion. Moreover, there are scriptures which are sometimes perverted, as though they intimated that prayer or other religious duties were not incumbent on wicked men. Thus it is said, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord;'^z 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination;'^a 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?'^b But these scriptures imply, not that the wicked are not obliged to perform religious duties, but that it is contrary to the holiness of God, and a great provocation to him, when they regard not the frame of spirit with which they perform them, drawing nigh to him with their lips, when their heart is far from him, or laying claim to the blessings of the covenant of grace, while continuing in open hostility against him. To apply this rule fully, would be to go through the whole of scripture, and to show how all the great doctrines of religion which are founded upon it, have a tendency to promote practical godliness in all its branches. But this we have endeavoured to do in all those instances in which we have had occasion to give the sense of scripture; and therefore shall content ourselves with this brief specimen, and leave it to every one to improve the rule in his daily meditations, in inquiring into the sense of scripture, in order to his being farther established in that religion which is founded on it.

z Prov. xxi. 27.

a Chap. xxviii. 9.

b Psal. l. 16.

[NOTE U. *Scriptures 'hard to be understood.'*—The passage, 'In Paul's epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction,' is so stoutly quoted by Romanists against the Bible being read by the laity at all, and so often appealed to by careless Protestants as an excuse for its being read listlessly and infrequently, that a few remarks upon it, additional to those made by Dr. Ridgely, may not be improper.

What the passage refers to are not words, but '*things*;' and these may be as effectually wrested when heard as when read. But must we infer that to hear the doctrine of Christianity, as well as to read the word of God, is prohibited to the laity?—Only '*some things*,' too, were '*hard to be understood*;' so that, even if a prohibition of scripture were a fair consequence, only some parts of it, and not all, should be prohibited.—Again, the persons who wrested them, were not the laity as distinguished from the clergy, but '*the unlearned and the unstable*,' as distinguished from the learned and the steady. Are not many of the Romish laity learned and steady, and many of the Romish clergy '*unlearned and unstable*?' Should not, then, the scriptures, if prohibited at all, be prohibited to a portion of the clergy, and unprohibited to a portion of the laity?—But Peter does not speak of '*the unlearned*' in the literary sense—for if he did he would include himself and the other apostolic fishermen of Galilee: he speaks of the unlearned in the moral sense, or in the sense of unacquaintance with the doctrine of Christianity, or inexperience of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. What misled and destroyed the persons to whom he refers was ignorance. Had they possessed the disposition of disciples, and '*asked wisdom of Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*,' they would have found the scriptures unmingled light and life to their souls; but because they were uninformed in even the rudimental knowledge of the gospel, and were so unsteady as to be '*tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*,' and yet attempted to analyze and probably affected to understand the most profound portions of scripture, they wrested them to their destruction.—Yet difficult as the portions were which they encountered, they are said to have done them damage, not by being *read*, but by being *wrested*. Before even froward and ignorant professors of religion, received injury from a text '*hard to be understood*,' they distorted, racked, or dislocated it (*σπρεβλουσι*); so that had they treated it with fairness, and allowed it to address them in its own freedom and energy, they would have found, as it lodged itself in their understanding, not a gory mass, but an agency of life and peace.—The very fact, also, of their wresting the scriptures is proof that they read them,—that they enjoyed unrestricted access to them,—that, up to the time when Peter wrote, the scriptures were laid freely open before even the uninstructed and uninitiated. Nor does Peter direct the warning which he gives against the reading of even '*things difficult to be understood*:' he directs it altogether against the wresting of them, and, in doing so, clearly assumes the reading of them to be at once a common privilege and a common duty. Paul, indeed, had written the things in question '*according to the wisdom given to him*,' and had formally addressed them to '*the faithful in Christ Jesus*,'—to '*all the saints which are in all Achaia*,'—to '*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*,' Eph. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 2. Peter also formally addressed his first epistle, and he likewise practically addressed his second, or that which contains the very passage we are examining, '*to the strangers scattered abroad, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*:' he addressed them simply as professed believers in the Saviour; he made no distinction of laity and clergy, or of novices and adepts, but wrote indiscriminately to all. Nor did he write only on topics which had not been wrested: he wrote, just as truly as Paul, '*some things which were hard to be understood*;' he wrote even on the same topics which, as discussed by Paul, had been wrested by the unlearned, 2 Pet. iii. 15, and first clause of verse 16. Whatever the Holy Spirit had dictated either by his

own pen or by the pens of Paul and other inspired writers, he expected to be prized, and therefore read, heard, or known, by all who named the name of Christ. 'We have,' said he, 'a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts,' 1 Pet. i. 19. But surely a light shining in a dark place—and shining upon all or in the sight of all who are enveloped in darkness—is an emblem exhibiting any idea rather than that of a book which is prohibited to all whom it may interest, except a select few. How utterly unwarrantable then is it, view Peter's words respecting the wresting of the scriptures as we may, to regard them as, in any sense or degree whatever, a prohibition of the Bible to the laity, or an excuse for its being read seldom or with inattention!—ED.]

THE PREACHING AND HEARING OF THE WORD.

QUESTION CLVIII. *By whom is the word of God to be preached?*

ANSWER. The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.

QUESTION CLIX. *How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?*

ANSWER. They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently; in season, and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

QUESTION CLX. *What is required of those that hear the word preached?*

ANSWER. It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear, by the scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their heart, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

WE have considered what method we are to take, in our private station or capacity, to understand the word of God. But we have great reason to be thankful, that he has ordained that it should be publicly preached or explained, as a farther means conducive to this end. Accordingly, we are led, in these Answers, to show who they are whom God has called to the work of preaching; how such ought to perform it; and with what frame of spirit we ought to attend on it.

By Whom the Word is to be Preached.

The persons by whom the word of God is to be preached are only such as he has qualified with gifts sufficient for the work. They ought also when called to it, to be duly approved of by those among whom the providence of God directs them to exercise their ministry.

I. We shall first say something concerning the qualifications which are necessary in those who are employed in preaching the gospel. Here it is observed in general, that they must be sufficiently gifted for it. This is so evident that it would be unreasonable for any one to deny it; for no one is to attempt any thing which he is not able to perform,—especially if it be a work of the highest importance, and if the unskilful managing of it may have a tendency to do prejudice to the interest of Christ, rather than advance it. It would be a reflection on the wisdom of a master, to employ his servant in a work which he has no capacity for, or intrust him with an affair which is likely to miscarry in his hands. In like manner, we are not to suppose that God calls any to preach the gospel but those whom he has, in some measure, furnished for it. The best, it is true, may say, as the apostle does, 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' Yet he adds, that they who are employed by God in this work, are made 'able ministers of the New Testament.'^c It is, indeed, a difficult matter to determine who are sufficiently gifted for it; the work being so great, and our natural and acquired endowments very small if compared with it. But that we may briefly consider this matter, we shall offer two particular observations.

^c 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

1. Some qualifications are moral; without which, they who preach the gospel would be a reproach to it. These qualifications respect, more especially, the conversation of those who are engaged in this work, which ought to be blameless and exemplary,—not only inoffensive, but such as they whom they are called to instruct may safely copy. Thus the apostle says, ‘Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.’^d And he advises the Corinthians to be ‘followers of him;’^e and commends the church elsewhere, for conforming themselves to his example, so far as it was agreeable to that of our Saviour;^f in which respect alone the best of men are to be followed.^g Now, preachers being an example to their hearers, supposes that they have that which we call a moral qualification, as necessary to the work of the ministry. Without this, a person will do more hurt by his example, than he can do good by his doctrine; for he will lay a stumbling-block in the way of Christians, who would be ready to say, as the apostle does to some of those who were teachers among the Jews, ‘Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?’^h or, dost thou live in the practice of those crimes, which thou condemnest in others, and exhortest them to avoid? This qualification, therefore, must be supposed to be necessary. Indeed, an experimental knowledge of divine truths, will greatly furnish preachers to communicate these truths to others, and incite them jealously to use their utmost endeavours that their hearers may be made partakers of the same experiences which they themselves have been favoured with. We are not to suppose, however, that this qualification alone will warrant a person’s engaging in the work of the ministry; for then every one who has experienced the grace of God, might attempt it, how unable soever he be to manage it to the glory of God, and the edification of the church.

2. There are, therefore, other qualifications more directly subservient to the work of the ministry. These the apostle speaks of when he describes a gospel minister as one who is ‘apt to teach,’ⁱ and able ‘rightly to divide the word of truth,’^k and, ‘by sound doctrine,’ to exhort and ‘convince gainsayers.’^l They who take upon them to explain scripture, and apply it to the consciences of men, ought certainly, with great diligence and hard study, to use their utmost endeavours to understand it. They ought, also, to be able to reason, or infer just consequences from it; that so they may appear to be well-versed in those great doctrines on which our faith and religion is founded. This, indeed, must be confessed to be a work of difficulty; and, they who think themselves best furnished for it, will have reason to conclude, as the apostle says, that they ‘know but in part, and prophesy in part.’^m

Again, there are various parts of learning, which may be reckoned in some respects ornamental, which would tend to secure him who preaches the gospel from contempt. There are also others more immediately subservient to our understanding scripture, namely, being well-acquainted with those languages in which the Old and the New Testament were written, and able to make critical remarks on the style and mode of expression used in each of them; and being conversant in the writings of those, whether in our own or other languages, who have clearly and judiciously explained the doctrines of the gospel, or led us into the knowledge of those things which have a tendency to illustrate them. Moreover, as preaching includes an address to the judgments and consciences of men, I cannot but reckon it a qualification necessary for it, that all those parts of learning which have a tendency to enlarge the reasoning faculties, or help us to see the connection or dependence of one thing upon another, should be attended to, so that we may be fitted to convey our ideas with judgment and method. These qualifications are to be acquired. We pass by those which are natural, namely, a sufficient degree of parts, and such an elocution as is necessary for those who are to speak to the edification of an audience, without which all other endeavours to furnish themselves for this work, will be to very little purpose.

II. They by whom the word of God is to be preached, are to be duly approved

d 1 Thess. ii. 10.
i 1 Tim. iii. 2.

e 1 Cor. iv. 16.
k 2 Tim. ii. 15.

f 1 Thess. i. 6.
l Tit. i. 9.

g 1 Cor. xi. 1.
m 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

h Rom. ii. 21.

and called to that office. A person may think himself qualified for it, without sufficient ground ; and hence the question of his being qualified ought to be submitted to the judgment of others, by whose approbation he is to engage in this work. The first thing which is to be inquired into, is, whether he is called to it by God, not only by his providence, which opens a door for his preaching the gospel, but by the success which he is pleased to grant to his endeavours to become qualified for it. Yet, as persons may be mistaken, and think they have a divine call to this work, when they have not ; it is necessary that they should be approved by those who are sufficient judges of their having such a call, that they may not be exposed to temptation, so as to engage in a work which they are not deemed sufficient for. It is not, indeed, in the power of ministers or churches, especially according to the present situation of things, to hinder an unqualified person, who has too high thoughts of his own abilities, from preaching to a number of people who are disposed to hear him ; yet no one is bound, or ought in prudence or in faithfulness to God or man, to own any to be a minister whose gifts do not render him fit to be approved. Nor, on the other hand, can any judgment be passed on any one's fitness, without sufficient acquaintance or conversation with him ; that, by this means, it may be known whether he be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, and able rightly to divide the word of truth.

Here, I think, there is some difference between the approbation which ought to be passed on those who first engage in the work of preaching, and the call to the pastoral office. The latter supposes the former. Hence, a person ought first to be approved of, as fit to preach the gospel, in the opinion of those who are allowed to be competent judges of the matter. His being so approved of is necessary to his entrance on that work with reputation and acceptance. Without it, he is to stand and fall to his own Master, and acquiesce in the approbation of those who are willing to sit under his ministry ; while others are not bound, being destitute of sufficient evidence, to conclude him furnished for or called to it. As to the call to the pastoral office, though no one has a right to impose pastors on churches, yet it is the indispensable duty of every church to inquire, not merely whether the person whom they have a desire to call to that office, be such an one as is approved by the greater number of them, but whether the step they are taking be such as has a tendency to secure their reputation as a church of Christ, without exposing them to the just blame and censure of others who are in the same faith and order with themselves, that they may do nothing which is in the least offensive, or has a tendency to weaken the interest of Christ in his churches. It is true, no one can put a stop to their proceeding, if they are resolved to set over them one who is not only scandalous in his conversation, but inclined to preach what is subversive of the fundamental articles of our faith ; yet they cannot be said, in such a proceeding, to act as a church which has obtained mercy from God to be faithful, or to engage in this important work with judgment. It is hence expedient that churches should set over them ministers approved by others as sound in the faith, as well as reckoned by themselves able to preach to their edification ; and, in order to this, it is expedient that some ministers and members of other churches should be present at their investiture in that office to which they have called them, not merely to be witnesses of their faith and order in common with the whole assembly, but to testify by their presence their approbation of their proceedings, and give ground to the world to conclude that the persons whom they have called are owned by others as well as by themselves. It hence is necessary that ministers who are to join in begging the blessing of God on a church's proceedings, and giving a word of exhortation to them, should be satisfied concerning the fitness of him whom they have called to be their pastor ; for their being satisfied of his fitness is supposed by their being present, and bearing their respective parts in the service. This, I think, is intended by that expression of the apostle in which he advises Timothy to 'lay hands suddenly on no man ; and not to be partaker of other men's sins ; but to keep himself pure,'^a that is, without guilt, as being active in approving of those whom he ought not to approve of. I do not, by this, take the power out of the hands of the church, of

setting a pastor over themselves; but only argue the expediency of their consulting the honour of the gospel in that matter, and acting so that they may have the approbation of other churches.

How the Word is to be Preached.

We are now to consider how the word of God is to be preached by those who are qualified and approved for the work and called to perform it. We shall consider this both as to the doctrines to be insisted on, and as to the manner in which they are to be delivered.

I. What they are to preach, ought to be sound doctrine. We do not mean that it must be sound merely in the estimation of him who preaches it; for there is scarcely any one who does not think himself sound in the faith, how remote soever his sentiments may be from the true intent and meaning of the word of God. But we mean that those doctrines are to be preached which are called sound by the apostle,^o such as are agreeable to that 'form of sound words' which is transmitted to us by divine inspiration,^p—'the doctrine which is according to godliness,'^q having a tendency to recommend and promote it. This is styled elsewhere, 'the faith once delivered to the saints;' which is not only to be preached, but 'earnestly contended for.'^r The doctrines in question are such as have a tendency to advance the glory of God, and do good to the souls of men; such as are relished by sincere Christians, who 'know the truth as it is in Jesus,' and are 'nourished up,' as the apostle says, 'in the words of faith and of good doctrine.'^s The teaching of these doctrines, as it has a peculiar reference to the gospel and to the way of salvation contained in it, is called 'preaching Christ,'^t or a 'determining to know nothing,' that is, to appear to know or to discover nothing, 'save Jesus Christ and him crucified,'^u or to deliver nothing but what tends to set forth the person and offices of Christ, either directly or in its remote tendency. Our Saviour advises the church to 'take heed what they hear,'^x signifying that we are to receive no doctrines but what are agreeable to the gospel. Sufficient intimation is thus given that only such doctrines are to be preached. The apostle calls the preaching of any other 'perverting the gospel of Christ;' and adds, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.'^y These are the only doctrines which God will own; because they tend to set forth his perfections, as they were at first communicated by him for that end.

II. We are now to consider the manner in which these doctrines are to be preached. This is laid down in several Heads.

1. They are to be preached diligently and constantly, in season and out of season. A minister is to consider the preaching of them the main business of life,—that which he is to 'give himself wholly to;'^z and all his studies are to be subservient to this end. He is to rejoice in all opportunities which he may have for leading those to whom he is called to minister, in the way to heaven; and be willing to lay out his strength, and those abilities which God has given him, to his glory. Thus the apostle says, 'I would very gladly spend, and be spent for you.'^a The word, therefore, is not merely to be preached occasionally, as though it were to be hid from the world; or imparted only when the leisure or inclination of those who are called to preach it will admit. The character which the apostle gives of gospel ministers, is that they 'watch for the souls of those to whom they minister;' that is, they wait for the best and fittest seasons to inculcate divine truths upon them. Their diligence in their work is particularly expressed by 'preaching the word, and being instant in season, and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine.'^b This statement implies that the word ought to be preached, not only on that day which God has sanctified for public worship, of which preaching is a part, but on all occasions when ministers are apprehensive that the people are desirous to receive and hear it.

o Tit. i. 9.
s 1 Tim. iv. 6.
y Gal. i. 7, 8.

p 2 Tim. i. 13.
t Col. i. 28.
z 1 Tim. iv. 15.

q 1 Tim. vi. 3.
u 1 Cor. ii. 2.
a 2 Cor. xii. 15.

r Jude, ver. 3.
x Mark iv. 24.
b 2 Tim. iv. 2.

2. The word of God is to be preached plainly. The apostle says, 'We use great plainness of speech.'^c This method of preaching is inconsistent with the using of unintelligible expressions; which is, as it were, a speaking in an unknown tongue, or an attempting to deliver things which neither the speakers nor their hearers well understand. The style ought to be familiar, and adapted to the meanest capacities; and it may be so without being exposed to contempt. It is particularly observed that preaching ought not to be 'in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.'^d The great design of it is, not to please the ear with well-turned periods, or rhetorical expressions, or an affectation of showing skill in human learning, in those instances in which it is not directly adapted to edification, or rendered subservient to the explaining of scripture. A demonstrative way of preaching is not, indeed, opposed to the plainness which is here intended; but it is 'the demonstration of the Spirit.' This differs, indeed, from that which the apostles were favoured with: who were led into the doctrines they preached, by immediate inspiration. Yet we are to endeavour to prove, by strength of argument, that what we deliver is agreeable to the mind and will of God; and at the same time, we are to do this with plainness of address, as those who desire to awaken the consciences of men, and give them the fullest conviction, proving from the scriptures, that what we say is true. This account the apostle gives of his ministry,^e as what was most adapted to answer its valuable ends.

3. The word of God is to be preached faithfully. This supposes that they who are called to this work, have the souls of those to whom they preach committed to their care; so that, if these perish for want of due instruction, they are, for their neglect, found guilty before God. Thus God says to the prophet, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel;'^f and therefore the prophet was to 'give them warning.' If he did this he 'delivered his own soul;' but if not, God intimates to him that 'their blood should be required at his hand.' That ministers are thus set to watch for souls supposes that they are accountable to God for the doctrines they deliver. Hence, the apostle speaks of them as 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' of whom it is required that they should 'be found faithful.'^g As a particular instance, he makes a solemn appeal to the elders of the church of Ephesus, that he had 'kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, nor shunned to declare all the counsel of God.'^h This faithfulness in the exercise of the ministry, is opposed to ministers having respect of persons from some obligation which they are laid under to them, or the prospect of some advantage which they expect from them; so that they are sparing in reproofing those who are blame-worthy, for fear of giving offence or losing their friendship. It is also opposed to preaching those doctrines which are suited to the humours and corruptions of men; and neglecting to insist on the most necessary and important truths, because they apprehend that these will be entertained with disgust. To minister in the latter way, is to act as though their main design were to please men rather than God, and is very remote from the conduct of the prophet Isaiah; who, when he was informed that the people desired that the prophets would 'prophesy smooth things' to them, and 'cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them,'ⁱ took occasion, how unwilling soever they were to receive his doctrine, to represent God as the Holy One of Israel, and to denounce the judgments which he would bring upon them. We may add that those are to be reckoned no other than unfaithful in their method of preaching, who, under a pretence of pressing the observance of moral duties, set aside the great doctrines of faith in Christ, and justification by his righteousness, which is the only foundation of our acceptance in his sight,—a blessing concerning which, in connection with moral virtue, we may say, without being supposed to have light thoughts of the latter, that the one ought in nowise to exclude the other. Nor can those be reckoned faithful who shun to declare those important truths on which the glory of God and the comfort of his people depend. Hence, if morality be rightly preached, it ought to be inculcated from evangelical motives, and connected with other truths which have a tendency more directly to set forth

c 2 Cor. iii. 12.
g 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

d 1 Cor. ii. 4.
h Acts xx. 27.

e 2 Cor. iv. 2.
i Isa. xxx. 10, 11.

f Ezek. iii. 17, &c.

the Mediator's glory. These truths ought not to be laid aside as controverted doctrines, which all cannot acquiesce in, or which the tempers, or rather the ignorance and corruption of men, may be supposed will not bear.

4. The word of God is to be preached wisely. There is to be wisdom in the choice of those subjects which have the greatest tendency to promote the interest of Christ, and the good of mankind in general. There are many doctrines which must be allowed to be true, which are not of equal importance with others, nor so much adapted to promote the work of salvation, and the glory of God in that work. There are some doctrines which the apostle calls 'the present truth,'^k in which he instructs those to whom he writes. Accordingly, those truths are to be frequently inculcated which, because of their holiness, spirituality, beauty, and glory, are most opposite to the dictates of corrupt nature and carnal reason.—Again, those doctrines are to be explained and supported by the most solid and judicious methods of reasoning, which are very much perverted and undermined by the subtle enemies of our salvation.—Moreover, whatever truth is necessary to be known, as subservient to godliness, which multitudes are ignorant of, is to be frequently insisted on, that they may not be destroyed for lack of knowledge; and those duties which we are most prone to neglect, in which the life and power of religion discovers itself, are to be inculcated as a means to promote practical godliness.

The wisdom of those who preach the gospel, farther appears in suiting their discourses to the capacities of their hearers. Some of these, it must be supposed, are ignorant and weak in the faith, and cannot easily take in those truths which are, with much more ease, apprehended and received by others. Now, for their sake, the word of God is to be preached with the greatest plainness and familiarity of style. Thus the apostle speaks of some who needed to be 'fed with milk,' being 'unskilful in the word of righteousness,' and, as it were, 'babes' in knowledge;^l while others, whom he compares to 'strong men,' were fed with 'meat,' which was agreeable to them. Here he doth not mean, as I apprehend, a difference of doctrines, as though some were to have nothing preached to them but moral duties, while others were to have the doctrines of justification, faith in Christ, &c. preached to them; but he means rather a different way of treating the subjects, as to the closeness and connection of the reasoning by which they are established, which some are better able to improve and receive advantage from than others.—Again, some hearers must be supposed to be wavering, and in danger of being perverted from the faith of the gospel. And for their sakes, the most strong and cogent arguments are to be made use of, and well managed, in order to their establishment in that faith; and those objections which are generally brought against it are to be answered.—Again, others are lukewarm and indifferent in matters of religion; and need to have awakening truths insisted on with great seriousness and affection.—Moreover, others are assaulted with temptations, and subject to many doubts and fears about the state of their souls and the truth of grace; or, it may be, their consciences are burdened with some scruples about the lawfulness or expediency of things, and some hesitation of mind whether what they engage in is a sin or a duty. Now, that the word may be adapted to their condition, the wiles of Satan are to be discovered, cases of conscience resolved, evidences of the truth of grace or the marks of sincerity and hypocrisy plainly laid down, and the fulness, freeness, and riches of divine grace, through a Mediator, set forth as the only expedient to fence them against their doubts and fears, and keep them from giving way to despair.

5. The word of God is to be preached zealously, with fervent love to God and to the souls of his people. Thus it is said concerning Apollos, that 'being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.'^m This zeal does not consist in a passionate, furious address, arising from personal pique and prejudice, or in exposing men for their weakness, or expressing an undue resentment of some injuries received from them; but it is such a zeal as is consistent with fervent love to God and to the souls of men. The love which is to be expressed to God, discovers itself in the concern ministers have for the advancing of his truth, name, and glory, and the promoting of his interest in the world, which is infinitely pre-

k 2 Pet. i. 12.

l Heb. v. 12—14.

m Acts xviii. 25.

ferable to all other interests; and their love to the souls of men induces them to preach with concern and sympathy. Their hearers not only have the same nature in common with themselves, in which they must either be happy or miserable for ever; but they are liable to the same infirmities, difficulties, dangers, and spiritual enemies. Hence they who preach the gospel should express the greatest sympathy with them in their troubles, while they are using their utmost endeavours to help them in their way to heaven. They are to be considered as being, by nature, in a lost, undone condition; and the success of the gospel is to be regarded as the only means to prevent their perishing for ever. With respect to those in whom the word of God is made effectual for their conversion, ministers are to endeavour to build them up in their holy faith, as persons who, they hope, will be their 'crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming.'ⁿ

6. The word is to be preached sincerely, aiming at the glory of God, and the conversion, edification, and salvation of his people. Ministers must firmly believe the doctrines they deliver, and not preach them because they are the generally received opinion of the churches. For to preach them in that light is hardly consistent with sincerity; at least, it argues a great deal of weakness or want of judgment, as though ministers were wavering about those important truths which they think, in compliance with custom, they are obliged to communicate. Again, they must have no selfish and unwarrantable ends in preaching, namely, the gaining of the esteem of men, or promoting their own secular interest. Though what the apostle says is true, that 'the labourer is worthy of his hire,' and, 'they that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel;'^o the obtaining of temporal support ought not to be the principal end of a minister's labouring. The influence of such a motive is like what was threatened against the remains of the house of Eli, who were exposed to such a servile and mercenary temper, as to 'crouch for a piece of silver, and to say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.'^p The glory of God is to be the principal end of their ministry; and, accordingly, they are to endeavour to approve themselves to him in the whole of their conduct in it. Thus the apostle speaks of himself as 'not seeking to please men; which, if I do,' says he, 'I should not be the servant of Christ.'^q This method of preaching will be a means to beget, in the minds of men, the highest esteem for those who practise it.

More especially, the glory of God is to be set forth as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, or discovers itself in the work of salvation, brought about by him. This is the only expedient to render the preaching of the gospel conducive to answer the most valuable ends. And as, next to the glory of God, the conversion, edification, and salvation of men, are to be aimed at, such a method of preaching is to be used, as is best adapted to promote them. Sinners are to be led into a sense of their guilt and misery, while in an unconverted state; of the necessity of their believing on Christ to the salvation of the soul; and of the methods prescribed in the gospel for their recovery, and for their escaping the wrath to which they are liable. They are to be made acquainted with the gospel call, in which sinners are invited to come to Christ; and with his willingness to receive all that repent and believe in him. Moreover, as conversion is the peculiar work of the Spirit, they are to pray and hope for his grace, to give success to his ordinances, in which they wait for his salvation. [See Note V, page 481.] If God is pleased to send home the truth on the consciences of men, and enable them to comply with the gospel call, then the word is preached in a right manner, and their labour is not in vain in the Lord. As for those who are converted, their farther establishment and edification in Christ is designed, together with the increase of the work of grace which is begun in them. Accordingly, they are to be told of the imperfection of their present state, and what is still wanting to fill up the measure of their faith and obedience; and they are to be warned of the assaults which they are likely to meet with from their spiritual enemies, and of the wiles and devices of Satan, to interrupt the actings of grace, overthrow their confidence, or disturb their peace. They are also to be directed how they may improve the redemption purchased by

Christ, for the mortifying of sin, the obtaining of victory over temptation, and the increasing of their faith in him. Ministers, in addressing themselves to them, are to explain difficult scriptures, that they may grow in knowledge; and discover to them the evidences of the strength and weakness of grace, tending to promote the one, and prevent the other. The promises of the gospel likewise are to be applied to them for their encouragement; and they are to be excited to go on in the ways of God, depending on Christ, and deriving strength from him, for the carrying on of the work which is begun in them.

The Hearing of the Word.

We are now led to consider what the hearer's duty is, who desires to receive spiritual advantage from the word preached. This respects his behaviour before, in, and after his hearing the word.

1. Before we hear the word, we are to endeavour to prepare ourselves for the solemn work which we are to engage in. We are duly to consider how we need instruction, or at least, to have truths brought to our remembrance and impressed on our hearts. We are to consider also that this is an ordinance which God has instituted for that purpose; and that, as it is stamped with his authority, so we may depend on it that his eye will be upon us, to observe our frame of spirit under the word. We ought likewise to have an awful sense of his perfections, to excite in us an holy reverence and the exercise of other graces, necessary to our engaging in this duty in a right manner; and inasmuch as these are God's gift, we are to be very importunate with him in prayer for them. Among other things, we are to desire that he would assist his ministers in preaching the word, so that what shall be delivered by them may be agreeable to his mind and will; that it may be delivered in such a way that it may recommend itself to the consciences of those who hear it; that their understandings may be enlightened, and they enabled to receive it with faith and love; and that all those corruptions or temptations which hinder the success of it may be prevented. These and similar things are to be desired of God in prayer; not only for ourselves in particular, but for all those who shall be engaged with us in this ordinance.

We might here consider the arguments or pleas which we may make use of in such prayer. These are taken from those promises which God has made of his presence with his people, when engaged in public worship.^r We may also plead the insufficiency of man's instructions, without the Spirit's teaching, or leading us into all truth; and that Christ has promised that the Spirit shall be given to his people for this end.^s We may also plead our own inability to hear the word of God in a right manner; the violent efforts which are made by our corrupt nature to hinder our receiving advantage by it; and what endeavours Satan often uses in conjunction with it, to 'catch away,' as our Saviour expresses it in the parable,^t that seed which was sown in the heart, so as to make it become unfruitful. We may likewise plead the afflictive sense we have of the ill consequences which will attend our hearing the word and not profiting by it, whereby the soul is left worse than it was before; as the apostle says that, in the course of his ministry, he was to some 'the savour of death unto death.'^u We may also plead the glory which will redound to God, by the displays of his grace, in making the word effectual to salvation; and the great honour he hereby puts on his own institution, inasmuch as he thus sets his seal to it. We may also plead that through the ordinance of the word God usually dispenses his grace; that he has encouraged us to hope and wait for it in it; that multitudes of his saints, both on earth and in heaven, have experienced his presence with them under the word, whereby they were first enabled to believe in Christ, and afterwards established more and more in that grace which they were made partakers of at first from him; and that, therefore, we hope and trust that we may be admitted to participate of the same privilege.

2. There are several duties required of us in hearing the word. In particular, we are to try the doctrines which are delivered, whether they are agreeable to

^r Exod. xx 24; Matt. xviii. 20. ^s John xvi. 13. 14. ^t Matt. xiii. 19. ^u 2 Cor. ii. 16.

scripture, and founded on it, that we may not be imposed upon by the errors of men, instead of the truths of God. Moreover, we are to endeavour to exercise those graces which are suitable to the work we are engaged in. We are, as the apostle says, to 'mix the word with faith,'^x and express the highest love and esteem for the glorious truths which are contained in it, discovering the greatest readiness to yield obedience to every thing God commands, and thankfulness for whatever he has promised to us. Moreover, we are to hear the word with a particular application of it to our own condition, whether it be in a way of admonition, reproof, exhortation, or encouragement, and to see how much we are concerned to improve it to our spiritual advantage.

3. We are now to consider those duties which are to be performed by us, after we have heard the word preached. Some of these require privacy or retirement from the world. We are, in retirement, to meditate on, digest, and apply what we have heard; and at the same time, we are to examine ourselves, and so take a view of our behaviour, while we were engaged in public worship, in order to our being humbled for sins committed, or thankful for grace received. But this subject having been particularly considered under another Answer, relating to our sanctifying the sabbath in the evening of it,^y I shall pass it over at present.

There is another duty incumbent on us, after we have heard the word, which may conduce to the spiritual advantage of others,—it is, that the word which we have heard be the subject of our conversation. We are to take occasion to observe the excellency, beauty, and glory of divine truths, which are communicated in scripture. We are not to hear the word as critics, making our remarks on the elegance of style, the fluency of expression, or other gifts which we are ready to applaud in the preacher, on the one hand, nor exposing and censuring the defects which we have observed in his method of address, on the other. We are rather to take notice of the suitableness of the truths delivered to the condition of mankind in general, or to our own in particular, and observe how consonant the word preached has been to the holy scriptures, the standard of truth, and how it agrees with the experiences of God's people. We are also to take occasion to inquire into the meaning of scripture, especially some particular texts which have been insisted on, or in some measure explained, in the preaching of the word, in order to our farther information and improvement in the knowledge of divine things.

The last thing which is observed in this Answer, is that, after having heard the word of God, we are to endeavour to bring forth the fruit of it in our lives. This consists in a conversation becoming the gospel; and in our being induced by the word to 'deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.'^z We ought also to express a becoming zeal for divine truths, defending them when opposed, and endeavouring to establish others in them; so that we may recommend religion to them, as that which is the most solid foundation for peace, and leads to universal holiness; and that thus we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

^x Heb. iv. 2.

^y See Sect. 'The Sanctifying of the Sabbath,' under Quest. cxvii, cxviii.

^z Tit. ii. 13.

[NOTE V. *Are unconverted persons to be exhorted to pray?*—Here, and in other places, Dr. Ridgeley speaks of unconverted men praying; and not a few ministers even exhort them to practise prayer as a means of their conversion. But is an unconverted man able to pray? Or—as in the case of believing—is there any warrant from scripture to expect, that, in his making an effort to pray, he will receive the grace or Spirit of prayer,—or that any adaptation exists between an unrenewed man's attempting to exercise prayer, and the production within him, by the Divine Spirit, of the dispositions and the faith with which prayer is associated? Prayer, it must be remembered, is the act or exercise of a believing soul. 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.' A man cannot desire the removal of evils which he does not believe to exist; nor can he desire the enjoyment of blessings which either are wholly unknown to him, or are so figured out by his mind as to be utterly misconceived and depreciated. Even, in fact, when the understanding is spiritually enlightened to 'know the things which are freely given to us of God,' and much more when it is in a state of ignorance, error, and delusion, it fails, without a special accompanying work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, to excite the holy desires of genuine prayer. Believers themselves 'know not what they should pray for as they ought; but the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered.' How, then, can men who are destitute alike of faith and of spiritual knowledge offer true prayer? 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.'

But I may be reminded that faith its lf cannot be exercised by an unrenewed man, and that yet he is expressly and often enjoined in scripture to believe. The cases of believing and of praying, however, are widely different. An effort to believe, an inquiry into the truths which are submitted to faith, a fixation of the mind on the doctrines to which assent is required, is just to put the soul into that attitude, to have it brought into that contact with the gospel, in which the Divine Spirit enlightens and renews it. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' An adapted instrumentality is set up by the renovator of the heart and the enlightener of the understanding, for performing his saving work upon the sinner; and this instrumentality, as brought into contact with the mind, is the way, the path, the approach by which faith *comes*. To have the mind fixed on vacancy, or on what is foreign to its good, is to have it directed to what not even the grace of the Holy Spirit will make a means of enlightening it; while to have it fixed, in the way of inquiry, or perusal, or reflection, on the gospel, is to have it directed to 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,'—to what he makes 'the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation,'—to the very thing the spiritual import of which he teaches, the divine evidences of which he discloses, and the details of which he makes matters of the soul's unfeigned and joyous assent. There is thus a direct adaptation of hearing the word to believing it,—of fixing the attention on divine truth to receiving the grace of faith; and this adaptation is exhibited and enforced in each of the numerous instances in which unconverted hearers of the word are directly commanded to believe. But is there any such adaptation between an effort to pray and receiving the grace of prayer,—or rather, between an effort to pray, and the conversion of the sinner? Is conversion, or the spirit of true prayer, anywhere said to come by attempts to pray? Is there suitable instrumentality, or instrumentality of any kind or degree, in the thoughts or desires of an unconverted man's attempt at devotion, to work the regeneration of his soul, or the impartation to him of the faith and holy affections of true prayer? Are commands, in any instance, addressed to the unrenewed to offer prayer as an act of passing from spiritual death to spiritual life,—or, still more, to offer it as a means of experiencing conversion? Few persons, if any, will answer these questions in the affirmative; and yet they would require so to answer them, in order even to maintain the alleged parallel between the Bible's commands to unrenewed men to believe, and the exhortations which ministers frequently address to unrenewed persons to pray.

Prayer is, no doubt, the *duty* of every man; but so is love to God, humility, self-denial, Sabbath-sanctification, almsgiving, honesty,—everything, in fact, which the divine law enjoins. Yet who—if he would maintain consistent or scriptural views of the economy of salvation—would inculcate, upon spiritually dead men, moral duties, as means, or antecedents, or concomitants, on their own part, of their being made spiritually alive? To hear, to listen, to hearken, to consider one's ways, to search the scriptures, to seek the Lord, are duties enjoined on unconverted men which they may perform simply as enjoying access to the divine word; to believe and to repent, are duties enjoined on them, which they may perform by the enlightening and renovating work of the Divine Spirit within them, through the instrumentality of the word which they were hearing or considering; and to pray, to praise, to love, to obey, to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, are duties enjoined on them, which they may perform when they are no longer unconverted, but are made alive unto God, and have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. True prayer is the cry of the new-born soul,—the desire of the babe for the sincere milk of the word,—the hungering of a spiritually active being for the bread of life and the righteousness of the reign of grace. 'Behold, he prays!' said the Lord to Ananias, respecting Saul of Tarsus; 'behold, he prays!' That the man who had breathed out slaughter against the disciples, and who had persecuted them even unto strange cities, now prayed,—that he breathed the affections and exercised the faith of one who approached with spiritual desires the throne of the divine grace,—was the evidence to which the Lord of glory himself pointed that the man had been 'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' and had 'put on Christ.' Even the evangelical writers and preachers, indeed, who incautiously at times recommend prayer as a means of conversion or a precurrent duty to believing, in general describe it as, in its own nature, the act or the exercise only of a true convert or believer in Jesus,—as 'the pulse of the soul,' the breathing of sanctified desires, the expression of feelings and the uttering of thoughts which only the indwelling Spirit of God produces and sustains.

But, it may be asked, Is formal prayer, or an attempt to pray, on the part of children, or of nominal professors of religion who furnish no satisfactory evidence of being believers in Christ, to be discouraged? This question may be answered by another, Is honesty, veracity, or external obedience to any divine command whatever, to be discouraged? Surely not. Yet while labour is expended in showing to all whom we instruct what the divine law is, what duties it requires, what intimate connexion there is between each part of obedience and true happiness or well-being; every care must be used to exhibit prominently the way of salvation,—to show that 'entrance into life,' or experience of justification and regeneration, is on the foreground of all duty,—to press as of immediate obligation the commands to believe and repent,—and to guard most sedulously against the impression being maintained or produced that formal prayer or external moral obedience, in any form whatever, either is life itself or is a means leading to its possession.—ED.]

THE SACRAMENTS.

QUESTION CLXI. *How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation ?*

ANSWER. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety and intention of him by whom they are administered ; but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted.

QUESTION CLXII. *What is a sacrament ?*

ANSWER. A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit, unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation ; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces ; to oblige them to obedience ; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without.

QUESTION CLXIII. *What are the parts of a sacrament ?*

ANSWER. The parts of a sacrament are two ; the one, an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment ; the other, an inward and spiritual grace, thereby signified.

QUESTION CLXIV. *How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in his church, under the New Testament ?*

ANSWER. Under the New Testament, Christ hath instituted in his church only two sacraments Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

It has pleased God, in setting forth the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, to impart his mind and will to man, in various ways, besides the discovery which he makes of himself in the dispensations of his providence. These are more especially reducible to two general Heads, namely, his making it known by words, which is the more plain and common way by which we are led into the knowledge of divine truths ; and his making it known by visible signs, which are sometimes called types, figures, or sacraments. The former we have already insisted on ; the latter we now proceed to consider. Here we are first to explain the nature, and show what are the parts, of a sacrament, as we have an account of them in the two last of these Answers ; and then we are to consider how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation, as explained in the first of the Answers.

The Nature and Parts of a Sacrament.

1. In order to our understanding the nature and parts of a sacrament, we shall first consider the meaning of the word. It is certain that the word 'sacrament' is not to be found in scripture, though the thing intended by it is there expressed in other words. For this reason, some have scrupled to make use of it, and chosen rather to make use of other phrases more agreeable to the scripture-mode of speaking. But though we are not to hold any doctrine which is not founded on scripture ; yet those which are contained in it may be explained in our own words, provided they be consonant to it. The Greek church knew nothing of the word 'sacrament,' it being of Latin original. Instead of it, they used the word 'mystery ;' thereby denoting that there is in the sacraments, besides the outward and visible signs, some secret or hidden mystery signified. The Latin church used the word 'sacrament,' not only as signifying something which is sacred, but as denoting that thereby they were bound as with an oath to be the Lord's. Thus the psalmist says, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments ;'^a and God by the prophet, says, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'^b The word 'sacrament' was used, indeed, by the Romans, to signify the oath which the soldiers took to be true and faithful to their general, and to fight courageously under his banner. But the primitive Christians signified by the word, that, when they were called to suffer for Christ, which was, as it were, a fighting under his banner, they did in the ordinance of the supper, as it were, take an oath to him, expressing their obligation not to desert his cause. Now, as this notion is agreeable to the end and design of a sacrament, whatever be the origin of

^a Psal. cxix. 106.

^b Isa. xlv. 23.

the use of the word, I think we have no reason to scruple the using of it, though it be not found in scripture. Christians, however, ought not to contend or be angry with one another about this matter, it being of no great importance, if we adhere steadfastly to the explanation given of the ordinance in scripture. [See Note W, page 490.]

2. We shall now consider the nature of a sacrament, as described in one of the Answers we are explaining. Here it is observed concerning it, that it is 'an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ.' What we are to understand by an ordinance, and its being founded on a divine institution, which is our only warrant to engage in it, was formerly considered. Indeed, every duty which is to be performed by God's express command, and which he has designed to be a pledge of his presence, and a means of grace, is a branch of religious worship, and may be truly styled an holy ordinance. Now, that the sacraments are founded on Christ's institution, is very evident from scripture. Thus he commanded his apostles, to 'baptize all nations;'^c and, as to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, he commanded them to 'do' what is contained in it, 'in remembrance of him.'^d

The persons for whom the sacraments were instituted, are the church, who stand in an external covenant-relation to God, and, as the apostle says, are 'called to be saints.'^e It is to them, more especially, that Christ, when he ascended up on high, gave ministers, as a token of his regard to them; that thus those may be edified who are styled 'his body.'^f And, though these ministers are authorized to preach the gospel to all nations,—a work which is necessary for the gathering of churches out of the world; yet they are never ordered to administer the sacraments to all nations, nor indeed to any—especially the sacrament of the Lord's supper—till they profess subjection to Christ, and by doing so join in the fellowship of the gospel. As the sacraments under the Old Testament dispensation were to be administered to none but the church of the Jews, the only people in the world who professed the true religion; so, under the gospel dispensation, none have a right to sacraments but those who are professedly devoted to him.

3. We are now to consider the matter of the sacraments. This is set forth in general terms; and is also called in one of the Answers we are explaining, the parts of a sacrament. These are an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace signified by it. Or, a sacrament, as it is otherwise expressed, signifies, seals, and exhibits to those who are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of Christ's mediation. These words are often used, but not so well explained as might be desired.

It is called a sign, in which, by a visible action, some spiritual benefits are signified. This is undoubtedly true. And it is a reproach cast on God's holy institutions, to deny, as some do, that the sacraments are divine ordinances, and to style them carnal ordinances, beggarly elements, or a re-establishing of the ceremonial law; without distinguishing between significant signs which were formerly ordinances to the Jewish church, but are now abolished, and those signs which Christ has given to the gospel church. We must consider that a sacrament, as a sign, agrees in some things with the preaching of the word. Christ and his benefits are set forth, both by it and by preaching, as objects of our faith. The same ends also are desired and attained by both, namely, our being affected with the blessings purchased by him, and making a right improvement of them, together with our enjoying communion with him; and they are both sacred ordinances, instituted by Christ, and therefore to be attended on in an holy manner. But, on the other hand, they differ, with respect to the way or means by which Christ and his benefits are set forth. In the preaching of the word, there is a narration of what he did and suffered; and, on this account, the apostle says, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'^g But, in the sacraments, there is a representation of the same thing by signs; on which account we may use in reference to them the words of the prophet, 'Mine eye affecteth mine heart,'^h as there is the external symbol of Christ's dying love, which is an inducement to us to love him

^c Matt. xxviii. 19.

^f Eph. iv. 16.

^d Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, compared with 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

^g Rom. x. 17.

^e Rom. i. 7.

^h Lam. iii. 51.

again. They also differ in this, that, not only are the sacraments designed to instruct, but, in our observance of them, we signify our engagement to be the Lord's.

The sacraments are also said to seal the blessings which they signify; and accordingly they are called, not only signs, but seals. It is a difficult matter to explain and clearly to state the difference between these two words, or to show what is contained in a seal that is not in a sign. Some think that it is a distinction without a difference. The principal ground which most divines proceed upon, when they distinguish between them, is its being saidⁱ concerning Abraham, 'He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.'^k But the same thing might have been affirmed concerning circumcision or any other significant ordinance, if the words 'sign' and 'seal' were supposed to be of the same import; for it is not said he received the ordinance of circumcision, which is not only a sign, but a seal,—but he received that which was a sign, or a seal of the blessing about which his faith was conversant. But that we may explain this matter, without laying aside those words which are commonly used and distinguished in treating on this subject, it may be observed that a sign is generally understood as importing any thing which has a tendency to signify or confirm something which is transacted, or designed to be published and made visible. Accordingly, some signs have a natural tendency to signify the things intended by them; as the regular beating of the pulse is a sign of health, smoke the sign of fire. Other things not only signify but represent that which they give us an idea of, by some similitude which there is in it, as the picture does its original. Other things are significant only as they are ordained or designed to be so by custom or appointment. Thus, in civil matters, a staff is a sign of power to exercise an office; the seal of a bond or conveyance, is the sign of a right which is in that document conveyed or made over to another to possess. It is in this latter point of view that the sacraments are signs of the covenant of grace. They do not naturally represent Christ and his benefits; but they signify them by divine appointment. But, on the other hand, a seal, according to the most common acceptation of the word, imports a confirming sign.^l Yet we must take heed that we do not, in compliance with custom, include more in our ideas of this word than is agreeable to the analogy of faith. Let it be considered, therefore, that the principal method God has taken for the confirming of our faith in the benefits of Christ's redemption, is his own truth and faithfulness, whereby the heirs of salvation 'have strong consolation,'^m or else the internal testimony of the Spirit of God in our hearts. The former is an objective means of confirmation; and the latter is a subjective means, and is called by the apostle our 'being established in Christ, and sealed, having the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'ⁿ This, however, is not the sense in which we are to understand the word as applied to the sacraments. If we call them confirming seals, we intend nothing else but that God has, to the promises that are given us in his word, added these ordinances; not only to bring to mind the great doctrine that Christ has redeemed his people by his blood, but to assure us that they who believe in him shall be made partakers of redemption. Hence, these ordinances are a pledge to them of redemption; and in regard to them God has so set his seal that, in an objective way, 'he gives believers to understand that Christ and his benefits are theirs. At the same time, they are obliged by faith, as well as in an external and visible manner, to signify their compliance with his covenant; and their doing so we may call their setting to their seal that God is true, as we may allude to that expression of our Saviour, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.'^o The sacraments are God's seals, as they are ordinances given by him for the confirmation of our faith, that he would be our covenant God; and they are our seals when we profess in the observance of them, as we ought also to do by faith, that we give ourselves up to him to be his people, and desire to be made partakers in his own way, of the benefits which Christ hath

ⁱ Rom. iv. 11.

^k Καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβε περιτομῆς, σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως.

^l When these two are distinguished by divines, the one is generally called *signum significans*, the other, *signum confirmans*; or, the former is said, *signum figure*; the latter, *obsignare*.

^m Heb. vi. 17, 18.

ⁿ 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

John iii. 33.

purchased. Thus concerning the sacraments, as being signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

There is another expression, used in this Answer, which needs a little explanation; namely, the sacraments being said, not only to signify and seal, but to 'exhibit the benefits of Christ's mediation.' 'To exhibit' sometimes signifies to show or present to our view. If the word be so understood in this place, it imports the same as when it is said that the sacraments are signs or seals of the benefits of Christ's mediation, or significant ordinances for directing and exciting our faith, as conversant about what we are to understand by them. Again, 'to exhibit' sometimes signifies to give, communicate, or convey. And as 'exhibiting,' in the definition which we have of a sacrament in the Shorter Catechism, is not only distinguished from signifying and sealing, but is described as that by which Christ and his benefits are 'applied' to believers; I am inclined to think that it is in this latter sense that the word is to be understood in the Answer which we are explaining. If so, we must distinguish between Christ's benefits being conveyed, made over, exhibited, or applied, by the gift of divine grace, through the effectual working of the Spirit; and this being done by an ordinance, as an external means of grace. Accordingly, I am bound to conclude that, as the Spirit of God gives the benefits of redemption to believers who engage in a right manner in the observance of the ordinances; so this grace is represented, and God's people have ground to expect, as far as an ordinance can be the means of it, that they shall be made partakers of these benefits. We may also observe that, though the sacraments are appointed to signify to all who partake of them, that Christ has purchased salvation for his people, or that the work of redemption is brought to perfection; yet it is they only who engage in the observance of them by faith, who can look upon them as signs or seals to confirm their faith, that they have a right to the benefits of Christ's redemption, as not only signified but exhibited or applied to them. The sacraments are thus signs to those who believe, in a sense in which they are to none others.

4. We are now to consider the persons to whom the sacraments are given. These are described as those who are within the covenant of grace. To be within the covenant of grace, implies either a being externally in covenant with God, or a being internally and spiritually so, as interested in its saving blessings. They who are externally in covenant, are such as are visibly so; who are called by God's name, professedly devote themselves to him, and lay claim to him as their God. These, if they are no otherwise in covenant, are said to be in Christ as the branch which beareth no fruit is said to be in the vine.^p They are like those whom the prophet speaks of, when he says, 'Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness.'^q They have the ordinances, which must be reckoned a very great privilege; they have the external overtures of divine grace, the convictions and strivings of the Spirit; and thus they enjoy those means by which God is sometimes pleased to work special grace; and when that special grace is wrought in them, they may conclude themselves to have more than the external blessings of the covenant. Accordingly, some are internally or spiritually in covenant, children of God by faith. These are such as are true and real members of Jesus Christ, by a federal or conjugal union with him. They have the same mind as was in him, and receive vital influences from him, being made partakers of the Spirit. They have, not only professedly, but by faith, embraced him in all his offices; and have surrendered themselves to him to be entirely his, their understandings to be guided and directed, their wills and affections to be governed by him; and are desirous to be disposed of by him, in the whole conduct of their lives. As to the privileges which they partake of, they have not merely a supposed but a real interest in all the benefits which Christ has purchased; they have a right to his special care and love, which will render them safe and happy, both here and hereafter.

Now, with respect to both classes, they are supposed to attend on the sacraments. The former, indeed, have not a right to the saving blessings signified by them.

^p John xv. 2.

^q Isa. xlviii. 1.

Hence, if they know themselves to be strangers to the covenant of promise, they profess, by engaging in the ordinance of the supper, to lay claim to that which they have no right to. Yet, if their wanting an interest in the covenant be not discernible in their conversation, which is blameless in the eye of the world; men, who are not judges of their hearts, have no warrant to exclude them from the sacraments. But, on the other hand, not only have they who are savingly or internally in covenant, a right to these ordinances in common with others, but Christ and his benefits, as was before observed, are exhibited and applied to them, as they have ground to conclude by faith that they have an interest in all the blessings which he has purchased.

5. We are now to consider what those benefits are which Christ communicates to his people in the sacraments, and which are signified by them. Some are common to the whole church. These are relative and external, rather than internal; and by possessing them, the church are distinguished from those who are without. They are advantages; though not such as are of a saving nature. Thus the apostle says, 'What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision?'^r And he replies, 'Much every way,' or, in many respects; as if he had said, 'Circumcision is an honour which God has put on the church, as taking them into a visible relation to himself, and giving them the means of grace, in possessing which they are more favoured than the rest of the world.' Again, there are benefits of Christ's mediation which are more especially applicable to believers. God makes every ordinance, and the sacraments in particular, subservient to the increase of their faith and all other graces. As faith is wrought under the word, it is, as will be considered under a following Answer, farther established and increased by the Lord's supper. And as believers have, in this ordinance, an occasion to exercise their love to one another; so they have communion with Christ. This has a tendency to carry on the work of grace begun in the soul, and to enhance their love to Christ, who is eminently set forth and signified in the ordinance; and, from the view they have of their interest in him, arises a stronger motive and inducement to hate all sin in the whole course of their lives.

How the Sacraments become Effectual Means of Salvation.

We are now to consider how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation; or whence their efficacy is derived to answer that great end. Now, they do not become effectual means of salvation by any power in themselves. For we are not to suppose that they are more than ordinances, by which God works those graces which we receive under them, and which it is his prerogative alone to confer. Again, the efficacy of the sacraments is not derived from the piety or intention of those by whom they are administered; who, though they are styled 'stewards of the mysteries of God,'^s as persons to whom the administration of the ordinances is committed, yet have not the least power to confer that grace which is Christ's gift and work. Thus the apostle says, 'Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave unto every man?'^t The Papists, however, suppose that the efficacy of the sacraments arises, partly from an internal virtue which is in them to confer grace, which they illustrate by a far-fetched similitude, taken from the virtue there is in food to nourish the body, forgetting that no external act of religion can have a tendency to nourish the soul, without the internal efficacious grace of the Spirit accompanying it; and partly from the design or intention of the priest who administers them, as they are consecrated and designed by him with the view of being efficacious. There is also an absurd notion maintained by some Protestants, as well as the Papists, namely, that the sacrament of baptism, administered to infants, washes away the guilt of original sin, and gives them a right and title to heaven; so that by virtue of it they are saved, if they happen to die before they commit actual sin. This account of the manner in which the sacraments become effectual to salvation, is absurd to the last degree; for it puts a sanctifying and saving virtue into that which is no more than an outward

^r Rom. iii. 1, 2.

^s 1 Cor. iv. 1.

^t Chap. iii. 5.

and ordinary means of grace. As to the efficacy of the sacraments arising from the intention of him who administers them, it lays the whole stress of our salvation on the secret design of men, in whose power it is supposed to be to render the ordinances means of grace, or to prevent them from being so. But to think thus is in the highest degree derogatory to the glory of God.

The sacraments become effectual means of salvation only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they were instituted. As, 'without Christ we can do nothing,'^u so without his blessing we can receive nothing. Ordinances are only the channel through which grace is conveyed. But Christ is the author and finisher of faith; and he conveys his grace by his Spirit, when he brings the heart into a good frame, and excites suitable acts of faith and love in those who are engaged in the ordinances, and maintains the lively impressions of them, which have a tendency to promote the work of grace in the whole conduct of their lives.

What the Sacraments of the Gospel Dispensation are.

We proceed to consider what sacraments Christ has instituted under the New Testament dispensation. It has pleased God, in every age of the world, to instruct his people by sacramental signs, as an addition to other ways in which he communicates his mind and will to them. Even our first parents, in their state of innocence, had the tree of life; which was a sacrament or ordinance for their faith, that if they retained their integrity, and performed the conditions of the covenant which they were under, they would be led into a farther conviction that they should certainly attain the blessings promised in that covenant. Some think, too, that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was another sacramental sign, whereby they were given to understand that, if they sinned, they should die. And paradise in which they were placed, was a sacrament, or kind of type of the heavenly state; inasmuch as there is an allusion to it in that promise, 'To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God;'^x and heaven is, in another place, called 'paradise.'^y Others think the sabbath was a sacramental sign to our first parents, of that eternal sabbatism which they should celebrate in a better world, in the event of their yielding perfect obedience as the condition of the covenant they were under. I desire, however, not to be too peremptory as to this matter. It is enough to my present purpose, to consider the tree of life as a sacrament; for from its having been so, it appears that God instituted such signs from the beginning of the world. But this subject having been insisted on elsewhere,^z we pass it over, and proceed to consider that, after the fall of man, there were sacramental signs, instituted as ordinances for the faith of the church in the promised Messiah. Sacrifices, in particular, were instituted, which signified his people's expectation that he would make atonement for sin by the shedding of his blood. Under the ceremonial law there was a large body of sacramental ordinances, or institutions, otherwise called types of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him. Some of these were occasional; as manna, the water out of the rock, and the brazen serpent in the wilderness, &c. Others were standing ordinances in the church, as long as the ceremonial law continued; as circumcision, the passover, and many things contained in the temple-service. These were the sacraments under the Old Testament. But, having taken occasion to say something concerning them elsewhere,^a I shall confine myself to those sacraments which Christ has instituted under the New Testament; which are only two, Baptism and the Lord's supper.

The Papists, indeed, have added five more to them, though without a divine warrant; and, to give countenance to what they have done, they pervert the sense of some scriptures, occasionally brought for that purpose. One of the sacraments which they have added, is what they call holy orders. By this they authorize

^u John xv. 5. ^x Rev. ii. 7. ^y Luke xxiii. 43. ^z See Sect. 'The Covenant with man in Paradise,' under Quest. xx.
^a See Sect. 'The Ceremonial Law,' under Quest. xcvi. and Sect. 'The Administration of the Covenant under the Old Testament,' under Quest. xxxiii, xxxiv, xxxv.

persons to perform the office of priests, or deacons; and they do so by the imposition of hands, and at the same time pretend to confer the Holy Ghost. The former they suppose to be the sign, the latter the thing signified. But this was not designed to be a sacrament given to the church; for the sacraments are ordinances which belong to all believers, and not only ministers. As for imposition of hands, whether it be considered as an ancient form of praying for a blessing on persons, or as used in setting others apart to an office; it seems principally to have had respect to those extraordinary gifts which the early Christians expected to qualify them for the discharge of their duties. Now, as these gifts have now ceased, the imposition of hands cannot be reckoned a sacramental sign; and the blessing conferred, namely, the Holy Ghost, from whom they received those extraordinary gifts, is no longer to be signified by it.

Another sacrament which the Papists add, is that of confirmation. By this they pretend that children who, in baptism, were made members of Christ, are strengthened and confirmed in the faith, and receive the Holy Ghost in order to their performing their baptismal vow. But, whatever engagement they are laid under by the ordinance of baptism, it is God alone who can confirm or strengthen them, and enable them to walk conformably to their engagement. And the grace which they need, it is not in the power of men to bestow; nor can it be conferred by any ordinance.

Another sacrament the Papists speak of, is penance. In this, after auricular confession made to the priest, and some external marks of sorrow expressed by the penitent, the latter is to perform some difficult service enjoined, which they call penance; whereby he makes satisfaction for his sins, and so is afterwards absolved from them. But this is an abominable practice; by which persons are rather hardened in sin, than delivered from it. It is derogatory to Christ's satisfaction, and has not the least appearance of a sacrament or ordinance of God's appointment.

Another sacrament which they have added, is extreme unction. This they found on James v. 14, 15, where the apostle speaks of 'sick' persons being 'anointed with oil in the name of the Lord;' and where it is said, 'the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' But, though the practice of anointing the sick with oil was observed in the first age of the church, while the miraculous gift of healing was continued; yet, since that miraculous gift has now ceased, no such significant sign is to be used. As for forgiveness of sins, mentioned by the apostle, it seems not to have been conferred by the use of that sign, but was humbly expected and hoped for, as an answer of prayer. It is therefore a very preposterous thing to reckon this anointing among the sacraments, under the gospel dispensation. [See Note X, page 490.]

Another sacrament which the Papists add, is that of matrimony. For this they have very little shadow of reason. They suppose that the apostle calls 'matrimony' 'a great mystery;'^b and this word the Greek church used to signify a sacrament. But Paul means, not that marriage is a mystery, but that the union between Christ and his church, which is illustrated by the conjugal union, is so.^c Indeed, matrimony is an ordinance given, not to the church, but to mankind in general, heathens as well as Christians. Hence, nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that it is one of the sacraments Christ has instituted in the gospel church. According to the Papists' opinion, too, the priests are excluded from this sacrament, and forbidden to marry, just as the laity are excluded from the sacrament of holy orders; so that when they pretend to add to those institutions which Christ has given to the church, or invent sacraments which he has not ordained, they betray, not only their folly, but their bold presumption. We must conclude, therefore, that there are only two sacraments which Christ has given to his church, namely, baptism, and the Lord's supper. These are particularly considered in some following Answers.

^b Eph. v. 32.

II.

^c See Sect. 'What Union to Christ is,' under Quest. lxx.

[NOTE W. *The Design of Observing the Lord's Supper.*—Dr. Ridgeley, though he afterwards exhibits the impropriety of various sorts of phraseology on the subject of the Lord's supper, not used in scripture, is disposed to pass uncensured the current language which represents the observance of that ordinance as the taking of an oath to the Lord, on the part of soldiers fighting under his banner, that they will not desert his cause. But the rule appears to be without exception that whatever phraseology complicates an idea as stated in scripture, or attaches to it relations which scripture does not represent as belonging to it, tends only to obscure it or to make false impressions of it upon the mind. Even conceding—as it is difficult to do—that the passages in Psalms and Isaiah, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;' 'Unto me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear,' sanction the taking of an oath in any literal sense to God, or do more than enjoin that general fidelity or that cleaving of heart to God which may well be metaphorically represented by a civil subject's taking an oath of allegiance to his king; it would not, I suspect, be easy to show how the taking of the oath consists in observing the Lord's supper, or how it is even distinctively connected with that act, or connected with it more than with any act of faith or of prayer, or with any prominent part whatever of a believer's entire course of spiritual obedience. How, again, shall we identify Christian soldiership with the observance of the Lord's supper? A Christian is a warrior, and a pursuer, and a sentinel, only as he fights against the corruptions of his nature, 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places,' and as he chases down into weakness and inaction the evil influences within and without which assail him, and keeps a vigilant outlook upon the lures of sin and the movements and stratagems of his spiritual foes. But if, by any effort of the fancy, his soldiership is to be depicted in connection with his observing the Lord's supper, he would be most appropriately represented in that act, not as swearing fidelity to the banner under which he serves, but as uniting in a demonstration of public joy and celebration in honour of the glorious Captain who redeemed him from captivity and made him a soldier, and who has pledged his unerring skill, and his unfailing faithfulness, and his unconquerable power, to lead him on to victory. But why identify what is meant either by the metaphor of swearing to the Lord, or by that of being good soldiers of Jesus Christ, with any one specific act of the Christian's life, and still less with that of his observing one of the various ordinances of Christ's appointment? To eat the last supper—according to the view which the scriptures give of the design of the act—is simply to 'remember Christ,'—to 'show the Lord's death till he come' Why should not this simple and most graphic and impressive view of its design be esteemed sufficient? Or is anything added to the amplitude, the clearness, the solemnity, the deep significance of the view, by blending with it the notions of soldiership and of swearing to the Lord? What illustrating ray is thrown upon the idea of 'showing the Lord's death,' by speaking of Christians taking an oath to the Lord, or of their pledging themselves not to desert the banner under which they fight? Few men, if they reflect a little, will fail to feel, and to feel sensitively, that the mixture of ideas tends at best to obscure and confuse; and, as evils very numerous and of serious magnitude have resulted from the use of complex and mystic phraseology on the subject of the Lord's supper, they will prefer to speak of that ordinance, and of the design and spirit of observing it, in the beautifully simple and sublimely expressive terms of scripture.—ED.]

[NOTE X. *Extreme Unction.*—The persons of whom the Apostle James speaks, were not—as in the case of extreme unction among the Romanists—the *dying*, but the *sick*. The object of anointing them, was not, like that of extreme unction, to prepare them for death, but to raise them up to health. The effective instrument or means of benefitting them, was, not a sacramental virtue, but 'the prayer of faith.' The 'oil' with which they were anointed, was not, like the substance employed in extreme unction, a balsam or a compound unguent, but pure 'oil,'—olive oil; nor, like the Romish balsam, which must be consecrated by a bishop in order to its being effective, was the oil holy, but common. The anointers were *πρεσβυτεροι*,—a word which, viewed in the light of some texts of scripture, is synonymous with 'bishops,' and, viewed in the light of other texts, means seniors, Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5, 7; 1 Pet. v. 1—5; 1 Tim. v. 1, 2; Luke xv. 25; John viii. 9: they were not, as in the administration of extreme unction, *one* person, but *πρεσβυτεροι*, more persons than one. Finally, the anointing—whether regarded as practised in an ordinary way, or as practised in connection with the supernatural gifts of the apostolic age—was in accordance, not with a religious rite, but with the eastern mode of the practice of physic, or medical science.

Another passage, quoted by Romanists in support of the doctrine of extreme unction, is Mark vi. 13, 'And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' But this passage, like the former, refers to the use of pure oil, to the application of it to the sick, to the eastern method of dealing with diseases, and to the restoration of the anointed persons to health. The administrators, too, were the seventy disciples, none of whom were in those 'holy orders' which are essential to the validity of extreme unction, but which, according to the Romanists, were not instituted till the night before our Lord's crucifixion; and the persons to whom the anointing was administered, were not members of the communion in which extreme unction is practised, but Jews and Samaritans, who lived before the Christian church, and much more the Romish community, was organized. The anointing, besides, was accompanied by the casting out of devils,—a practice which the Church of Rome affects to perpetuate with regard to infants, but which she does not sanction in connection with extreme unction, or in reference to the dying.

Strangely enough, the passages in the gospels which speak of the woman's anointing our Lord with an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, are adduced as another argument in favour of extreme unction, Matt. xxvi. 6—13; Mark xiv. 8, 9; John xii. 7. Though a serious refutation is hardly requisite, a few of many points of contrast between the anointing which these passages mention and the administration of extreme unction, may be stated. Comparing the two, then, we see ointment opposed to chrism; precious ointment of spikenard, opposed to a vulgar compound of oil and balsam; anointing of the head or the feet, opposed to anointing of the ears, the nose, the eyes,

the mouth, the hands, and the breast; anointing to prepare the body for burial, opposed to anointing to prepare the soul for the invisible state; anointing of the Saviour in acknowledgment of his divine excellencies, opposed to anointing of the sinner to 'take away the remainders of sins;' anointing one in perfect health, opposed to anointing one in mortal sickness; anointing by a woman belonging to the laity, opposed to anointing by a man invested with 'holy orders;' anointing suited to one who should die by violence, opposed to anointing of such a nature that they who die by violence are the only persons to whom it may not be administered; anointing which cost the administrator very large expense, opposed to anointing whence the administrator draws a considerable portion of his official gains.

One set of arguments *against* the doctrine of extreme unction, may be drawn from its own inconsistencies or absurd assumptions and consequences. Extreme unction is said to 'cleanse from the remainders of sins;' but, as it allows all or most who enjoy it to pass into the penal fire of purgatory, it must be an inefficacious rite, or a mere pretence. All pretended grace or virtue derived from it, vanishes, or is declared to be nugatory, if the patient be restored to health; so that it is a mere fiction, existing only in name. Extreme unction is sold for money, may be vitiated by 'want of intention' in the priest, forms a chief source of episcopal revenues, and often, from the suddenness of death, or the distance and inaccessibility of a priest, cannot be obtained; and, on these grounds, it could hardly have been instituted as a necessary or even an important means of preparation for dying, among a community many of whom are poor, dispersed, and subject to diseases of summary operation. The administration of the rite, by working on the patient's imagination, shutting him up from food, and withdrawing from him medicine and cordials adapted to promote his recovery, very frequently puts a premature termination upon life, and cannot, for one moment, be supposed to be sanctioned by Him who has said, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'

Another set of arguments against extreme unction, may be drawn from the want of adaptation in the rite to accomplish its professed object, or work out moral results. External applications, or physical influences on the body, cannot benefit spirit or man's moral nature. Nor is sin, as to its seat, or as to the influences which originate, aggravate, or accompany it, to be found in the outward organs of sense. Corrupt thought is conceived, and guilty action is produced, not by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, but by willing and lusting,—not by acts of perception through the bodily organs, but by acts of volition and desire in the heart. The seat and the instruments of moral disease, therefore, are brought under a healing influence, not when the eyes, nose, ears, mouth, and hands, but when the understanding and the will are touched,—not by a ministration of oil and balsam, but by the communication of grace, by the influence of truth, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, by the application of the atoning merits of 'the Lord our righteousness.' 'Bodily exercise profiteth little.' 'Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (—touch not, taste not, handle not; which all are to perish with the using—) after the commandments and doctrines of men?' 1 Tim. iv. 8; Col. ii. 20—23.

A third set of arguments against the doctrine of extreme unction, may be drawn from its inconsistency with several great doctrines of revelation. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to redeem from all iniquity; and it delivers from the fear of death, and from its sting, and leaves only its 'shadow,' 1 Cor. xv. 55; Ps. xxiii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 1—10. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' Believers in the Saviour are 'justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' 'There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Yet extreme unction declares that, in every Christian, there are 'remainders of sins' which it only, or future penal fire, has efficacy to take away! Apart, also, from the administration to them of any rite, and viewed simply as persons justified through the merits of Christ's atonement, and sanctified by the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christians are represented in scripture as enjoying 'peace,' 'triumph,' union to Christ, living hope that maketh not ashamed, confident expectation of passing from the body to be present with the Lord. They hence depend in no degree upon anything outward, but altogether on the merits of the Saviour; and, be they situated how they may, they eventually 'fall asleep in Jesus.' See Psal. xxiii. 3; Phil. iii. 3; and many other passages.

A fourth set of arguments against extreme unction, may be drawn from the silence respecting it of the divine word, and of early Christian antiquity. Direct denunciation or accidental mention of it in the Bible, would at least prove that it is not of recent origin, and might afford scope for unprincipled but ingenious criticism to attempt to find for it a scriptural sanction. But the utter silence of scripture regarding either it, or anything which resembles it—for we have shown that James vi. 14, 15, and kindred passages, refer to matters entirely different—proves it to be destitute of divine sanction, and, at the same time, excites a suspicion of its claiming no very high antiquity. Extreme unction was quite unknown in the early centuries. Narratives of the death-bed scenes of saints, and writings on the ordinances, rites, and ceremonies observed among the Christians, as well as theological and historical works of other classes, afford no trace of its having existed till long after the establishment of the papacy. Extreme unction does not date higher than about the ear 900 or 1000.—Ed.]

BAPTISM.

QUESTION CLXV. *What is Baptism?*

ANSWER. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

THE method in which we shall endeavour to explain this Answer is the following. We shall first prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water. We shall next show that baptism is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Lastly, we shall explain what is signified in baptism, and what engagements are laid upon the person baptized.

The Nature and Authority of Baptism.

First, then, we are to prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water.

1. There must be the application of water, either by dipping the person who is to be baptized into the water, or by pouring or sprinkling water upon him; otherwise the observance does not answer the proper and literal sense of the word 'baptize.' It is true, we sometimes find the word used in a metaphorical sense. Thus our Saviour speaks of 'the baptism that he was to be baptized with;' ^d whereby he intends the sufferings he was to endure in shedding his blood upon the cross. Elsewhere also it is taken, by a metonymy, for the conferring of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the disciples were given to expect after Christ's ascension into heaven, and which the apostles were made partakers of at the day of Pentecost, when there appeared to them cloven tongues, like as of fire, that sat upon each of them, as a sign that they should be filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak with other tongues, and be inflamed with an holy zeal for Christ's glory and interest. Such seems to be the sense of the word 'baptism,' as understood figuratively. We understand the word, however, in its most proper sense; and therefore suppose that baptism must be performed with water.

As to the mode of baptism, or the application of water, whether the water is to be applied to the person baptized, or he to be put into it, I purposely waive the consideration of the subject, till we are led to speak concerning the subjects of baptism, that we may insist on the several matters in controversy between those who maintain and those that deny infant baptism, which we shall have occasion to do under the next Answer. For I am ready to persuade myself, that what I shall advance under the present Answer, and also what I shall afterwards say respecting the improvement of baptism, will not be much contested by those who differ from us as to the subjects of baptism, and the mode of administering it.

2. We are now to consider that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament. It hence differs from those baptisms or washings which were frequently practised under the Old Testament dispensation; concerning which the apostle says, that it 'stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings,' ^e or baptisms. ^f We read of many instances in which persons were washed under the ceremonial law. Washing was an ordinance used in the consecration of persons to holy offices; as it is said, 'Aaron and his sons were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and washed with water,' ^g when they were consecrated to be priests. Again, when they ministered in holy things, or came near the altar, it is said, 'they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses.' ^h For this reason the laver was set be-

d Matt. xx. 22; Luke xii. 50.
g Exod. xxix. 4; Lev. viii. 6.

e Heb. ix. 10.
h Exod. xl. 32.

f Διαφορῶν βαπτισμῶν.

tween the tent of the congregation and the altar, and water was put there to wash in; and they washed their hands and their feet in it.ⁱ This ceremony was used also when the Israelites were subject to various uncleannesses. Thus, in the method of cleansing the leper, he was to 'wash himself;' and, 'after that,' he might 'come into the camp.'^k The same thing was to be done by those who were liable to uncleannesses of another nature.^l These ceremonial washings, when applied to persons, seem to have been ordained to signify their consecration or dedication to God, in some of the instances before mentioned; and, in others, they signified the means which God had ordained to cleanse the soul from moral impurity, which was denoted by the ceremonial uncleannesses which they desired to be purified from. These ordinances, indeed, expired along with the rest of the ceremonial law. Yet it is very evident from the institution of gospel baptism, that the sign is retained; though there are some circumstances in the thing signified by it, in which it differs from those baptisms which were formerly used by the Jewish church. The Israelites were hereby devoted to God, to observe that peculiar mode of worship which he prescribed by the hand of his servant Moses; we are devoted to God as those who hereby signify our obligation to walk according to the rules prescribed by Christ in the gospel. They used this ordinance to signify the cleansing virtue of the blood of Jesus, who was to come, and the Spirit that was to be poured forth in consequence of his coming; we use it to signify or express our faith in what Christ has accomplished, and in the grace which the Spirit in consequence works. Hence we call it an ordinance of the New Testament.

3. Baptism was instituted by Christ. This is evident from the commission he gave to his apostles, not only to preach the gospel to all nations, but to 'baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'^m This he appointed to be a standing ordinance in the church, throughout all ages; and on this account he promises, in the following words, that he will 'be with' his ministers, in fulfilling the commission which he gave them to execute, 'unto the end of the world.' We must conclude, therefore, that it is a standing ordinance in the church, and not designed to be observed only during the first age, till Christianity universally obtained. This we assert in opposition to the Socinians. They suppose that baptism was, indeed, instituted by Christ; but that the design of it was only that it should be an external badge or sign of the heathens' embracing the Christian religion, as they were formerly initiated into the Jewish church by the ceremonial washing which was then in use. The contrary to this opinion, however, will appear from what we shall have occasion to say under a following Head, when we consider what baptism was a sign and seal of; which is as applicable to the church in our day as it was to those who lived at the planting of it.

The Form of Baptism.

It is further observed that baptism is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In this solemn act of dedication, there is a professed acknowledgment of the divine Trinity. Accordingly, baptism is an act of religious worship; in which God's right to the persons baptized is publicly owned; and in which an intimation is made, that all saving blessings which are desired or expected in the ordinance, are given by the Father, through a Mediator, purchased by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. Much more is included than a being baptized by the authority of these divine persons; which is all that some of the Antitrinitarians will allow to be meant by 'in their name.' For though no ordinance can be rightly performed but by a divine warrant, yet this warrant is equally extended to the administering or observing of any other ordinance. Hence, a being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signifies more than this; namely, a person's being dedicated to them. In this dedication, a solemn profession is made that these divine persons have a right to all religious worship, which we are obliged to perform, as well as that all our hope of salvation is from them. Some think that this idea, which is principally intended in the form

i Exod. xl. 30, 31.

k Lev. xiv. 8, 9.

l Deut. xxiii. 10, 11.

m Matt. xxviii. 19.

of baptism, would be better expressed, if the words of institutionⁿ were rendered, 'Into the name of the Father,' &c. The same phrase is so rendered elsewhere;^o as when the apostle speaks of a person's being 'baptized into Christ,'^p and explains it as denoting a 'putting on Christ,' or a professing, as it is said,^q that we are Christ's. Thus they who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are denoted to be professedly their servants and subjects; under an indispensable obligation to put their trust in them, and to hope for all saving blessings from them, according to the tenor of the gospel.

It is inquired by some, whether it be absolutely necessary, in the administration of this ordinance, explicitly to make mention of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Some assert that it is not; because we read of persons being 'baptized in the name of Jesus,'^r and 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,'^s without any mention of the name of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost. It does not appear, however, that this was the express form of words used in baptizing those who are mentioned in the passages referred to; but it argues, only that the ordinance was administered, and that, in its being so, Christ's name and glory were proclaimed. Though the other divine persons are not particularly mentioned, it does not follow that the persons who administered the ordinance did not adhere to the express words of institution which were given to the apostles. It might as well be argued, that John did not baptize in the name of any of the divine persons, since, when we read of his baptism, it is said, 'I baptize you with water.' But it does not follow that he did not baptize them in the name of God; inasmuch as he plainly confesses, that 'God sent him to baptize with water.'^t But that this matter may be set in a just light, we must distinguish between a person's omitting to mention the Son or the Holy Ghost in the form of baptism, as denying them to be divine persons,—in which case the ordinance is invalid; and his doing so for no other reason but because he thinks we are not to be tied up to a particular form of words, but may sometimes baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and at other times in the name of Jesus. In the latter case, I will not say that the ordinance is invalid. Yet his manner of administering it will be highly offensive to many serious Christians, and can hardly be reckoned an instance of faithfulness to Christ; who has, by an express command, intimated what words are to be used.

What Baptism Signifies and Entails.

We are now to consider what is signified in baptism, and what engagements are laid on the person baptized. There are some, especially among the Socinians, who maintain that it is only an external or visible badge of Christianity in general, signifying a person's right to be called a Christian, or a professor of that religion which was instituted by our Saviour. Their design in advocating this notion seems to be, that they may evade the force of the argument which we bring to prove the divinity of the Son and the Spirit, from their being the object of that religious worship which, according to our explanation, is contained in the form of baptism. Did they intend, by being a Christian, the same thing as we do, namely, a subjection to Christ as a divine person, or a professed obligation which we are laid under to worship God the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, we should have no contention with them about this matter. But as we are not agreed as to the meaning of being a Christian, especially as they mean no more by it than our being obliged to adhere to a certain scheme of religious worship, prescribed by Christ, of what kind soever it be, in the same manner as a person is called a Mahomedan, because he embraces Mahommed's Alcoran as a rule of faith; we cannot think their account of baptism, as being an external badge of Christianity, to be a sufficient explanation of what is intended by it as a sign or significant ordinance.

There are several things, mentioned in this Answer, of which it is said to be a sign and seal, namely, our ingrafting into Christ, and obtaining remission of sins by his blood, our regeneration by his Spirit, our adoption, and resurrection unto eter-

ⁿ Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα.
^r Acts xix. 5.

^o Gal. iii. 27.
^s Chap. viii. 10.

^p Εἰς Χριστόν.
^t John i. 33

^q Gal. iii. 29.

nal life, which include all the benefits of Christ's mediation. These have been particularly explained under some foregoing Answers. But there is one which contains all the rest. Accordingly, baptism is generally described by divines, as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of all the duties, obligations, and privileges which are either enjoined or bestowed in it. What this covenant is, what its blessings are, and how the grace of God is manifested in it, have likewise been considered under some foregoing Answers.^u All that I shall now add concerning it is, that it contains all the promises in which our salvation is included, and that of these there is one which comprehends all the rest, and by which the covenant is often expressed,—namely, that God will be ‘a God unto his people,’^x ‘their shield and exceeding great reward,’^y that he will ‘put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people.’^z There are very great privileges contained in this relation,—namely, our being under the special care and protection of Christ; having a right to what he has purchased, and to that inheritance which he has laid up in heaven for his children; and enjoying communion with him here, and being made happy with him hereafter.

Now, the main thing to be considered, is, how baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant. We are not to suppose that this, or any other ordinance, confers the grace of the covenant, as the Papists pretend;^a for it is, at most, but a significant sign or seal of the covenant, while the grace of the covenant is the thing signified by it. There are, as was formerly observed, two ways by which persons may be said to be in covenant with God. There is a being in covenant professedly or visibly; and to exhibit persons as thus in covenant, is the immediate intent and design of this ordinance. But there is also a being in covenant, as laying hold on the grace of the covenant, when we give ourselves up to Christ by faith, and, in consequence, lay claim to the blessings of his redemption. Now, baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace in both these senses, though in different respects. The ordinance itself is a professed dedication to God, or an acknowledgment that the person baptized is obliged to be the Lord's; and signifies his right to the external blessings of the covenant of grace, which are contained in the gospel-dispensation. There is also more than this contained in a person's being given up to God in baptism, whether it be by himself, as in those who are baptized when adult, or by his parents, as in the case of infants; for the person who dedicates, expresses his faith in Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and hopes for the saving blessings which he has purchased for his people. It is one thing for this ordinance to confer these blessings, and another for it to be an instituted means in which we express our faith and hope that the blessings shall be bestowed, the person being devoted to God with that view.

There are two things which are more especially signified in baptism, namely, privileges expected, and obligations acknowledged. The privileges expected are such as accompany salvation, and are the special gift of the Holy Ghost, namely, the taking away of the guilt and pollution of sin, and our being made partakers of all the blessings which Christ has purchased, and which God the Father, in him, has promised to the heirs of salvation. I do not say that all who are baptized are made partakers of these privileges; but they are given up to God, or give themselves up to him in this ordinance, in the hope of obtaining them. Moreover, there is in baptism a public profession or acknowledgment of our obligation to be the Lord's. This is, from the nature of the thing, implied in its being a dedication to God. When we make a surrender of ourselves to him, we declare that we are willing to be his servants and subjects, and entirely at his disposal. Our doing this is contained in a fiducial act of self-dedication to God, and cannot be done by one in behalf of another. It is to be feared that many who give themselves up to God in this ordinance when adult, though they make a profession of their faith, yet do not give themselves up by faith. That matter, however, is known only to

^u See Quest. xxxi, xxxii.

^x Gen. xv. 1.

^y Chap. xvii. 7.

^z Heb. viii. 10.

^a There is a common aphorism among them, that the sacraments, and baptism in particular confer grace, *ex opere operato*.

the heart-searching God. Now, as in this ordinance we express our faith and hope concerning the privileges just mentioned ; so we, in this act of dedication, confess that God has a right to us, and that it is our indispensable duty to be his. Hence, by baptism, either we are by our own consent, as in self-dedication, professedly the Lord's ; or our being so is acknowledged by those who have a right to dedicate, and thereby to signify our obligation ; and as their act is highly just and reasonable, the persons devoted are obliged to stand to it, or else are brought under a great degree of guilt, in not being steadfast in God's covenant.

There is one thing more mentioned in this Answer, namely, that the person baptized is solemnly admitted into the visible church. But I choose to pass over this matter ; since it is hard to understand what some mean by the visible church, and by a person's becoming a member of it by baptism. We have elsewhere considered the difficulties involved in the description of the visible church ; together with the admission of persons into church communion, and their qualifications for it.^b If by being admitted into the visible church, we are to understand that a person has a right to all the ordinances of the church by baptism, without being admitted afterwards into it by mutual consent ; the notion is contrary to the faith and practice of most of the reformed churches. If, on the other hand, they mean by it, that there is a public declaration of our hope that the person baptized shall be made partaker of those privileges which Christ has purchased for and given to his church ; it is no more than what has been already explained in our considering the baptismal expectations and obligations. But whether this can properly be called an admission into the church, I leave to be determined by those who better understand what they mean, than I do, when they say that this is done in baptism.

THE SUBJECTS AND MODE OF BAPTISM.

QUESTION CLXVI. *Unto whom is Baptism to be administered ?*

ANSWER. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him ; but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.

Who are Excluded from Baptism.

IN this Answer, which principally respects the subjects of baptism, we have, first, an account of those who are excluded from this privilege, namely, such as are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise. The visible church is here considered in the most large and less proper acceptation of the word, as denoting all who profess the true religion. In this respect it is opposed to the Jews and heathen ; and also to those who, though they live in a Christian nation, are grossly ignorant of the gospel, and act as though they thought that it did not belong to them, not seeing themselves obliged to make any profession of it. These may be ranked among infidels, as much as the heathen themselves ; and, according to this sense of the word, are not members of the visible church, and, while in that condition, are not to be admitted to baptism. That they should be excluded from this ordinance is agreeable to the sentiments and practice of most of the reformed churches ; and cannot but be reckoned highly reasonable, by all who consider baptism as an ordinance in which a public profession is made of the person's being devoted to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If he be considered as adult—and of such we are now speaking—there is a signification, and thereby a profession made, that he gives himself up to God ; and, if the ordinance be rightly applied, there must be an harmony between the inward design of the person dedicating, and the true intent and meaning of the external sign ; and this harmony is, by divine

^b See Sect. 'The Visible Church,' and 'The Nature and Government of the Christian Church,' under Quest. lxi—lxiv.

appointment, a visible declaration of his adhering by faith to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and embracing that salvation which takes its rise from them. Now, this declaration must be made by faith, else the ordinance is engaged in after an hypocritical manner, and so will tend to God's dishonour, and the prejudice rather than the advantage of him to whom it is administered.

The Profession of Faith made in Baptism.

We are now to consider the necessity of those making a profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to him, who, being adult, are admitted to baptism. It was supposed, under the last Head, that if there be not an harmony between the internal frame of spirit in the person baptized, and the intent of the external sign, the ordinance is not rightly applied to him, inasmuch as he pretends to dedicate himself to God, while in reality he does not do so by faith. But it is further necessary, that he should make it appear that he is a believer by a profession of his faith; otherwise he who administers the ordinance, together with the assembly who are present, cannot conclude that they are performing a service which is acceptable to God. For their sakes, therefore, as well as for his own, the person to be baptized ought to make a profession of his subjection to Christ, as what is signified in this ordinance. That he should do so is agreeable to the words of institution, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them,'^c &c.; and, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved,'^d &c. I am sensible that some who have defended infant baptism, or rather attempted to answer an objection taken from this and similar scriptures against it, have endeavoured to prove that the Greek word^e signifies, 'make persons disciples;' that it is a metaphor taken from the practice of a person's being put under the care of one who is qualified to instruct him, whose disciple he is said to be, in order to his being taught by him; and that, therefore, we are made disciples by baptism, and afterwards are 'taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded.' This meaning of the Greek word is taken notice of in the marginal reading of our Bibles; which supposes that the passage may be rendered, 'make disciples of all nations.' But, I cannot think this sense of the word so defensible, or agreeable to the design of our Saviour, as that of our translation, namely, 'Go, teach all nations;' which agrees with the words of the other evangelist, 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature.' Besides, if we have recourse to the sense in question, to defend infant baptism, we do not rightly consider that it cannot well be applied to adult baptism, which the apostles were first to practise; for it cannot be said concerning the heathen, that they are first to be taken under Christ's care by baptism, and then instructed in the doctrines of the gospel by his ministers.^f [See Note Y, page 512.]

Moreover, a profession of faith in those who are baptized when adult, is agreeable to the practice of the Christian church at the planting of it. Thus it is said, 'They that gladly received the word were baptized.'^g We might also notice the case of the jailer, and of the eunuch, who were first converted, and then baptized.^h But, if it be retorted upon us that we are giving up the cause of infant baptism, it must be observed, that what we have stated does not in the least affect it; for when our Saviour gave his commission to the apostles to teach or preach the gospel to all nations and baptize them, it is to be supposed that their ministry was to be exercised among the adult, and that these were then utter strangers to Christ and his gospel. Hence, it would have been a preposterous thing to put them upon devoting themselves to him, before they were persuaded to believe in him; nor could they devote their children till they had first dedicated themselves to him.

Infant Baptism.

We are now led to consider the right of infants to baptism. This right they

^c Matt. xxviii. 19.

^g Acts. ii. 41.

II.

^d Mark xvi. 15.

^h Acts xvi. 31—33; viii. 37, 38.

^e Μαθητευατι.

^f Vid. Whitby in loc

have if those who are required to dedicate them to God are believers ; or if they are the offspring of parents of whom only one is a believer.

I. The right of the infant-seed of believers to baptism will appear if we consider baptism as an ordinance of dedication. It is the indispensable duty of believers to devote themselves, and all they have, to God. This duty is founded in the law of nature, and is the result of God's right to us and ours. Whatever we have received from him, is to be surrendered or given up to him ; whereby we own that he is the proprietor of all things, that we depend upon him for them, and that they are to be improved to his glory. This is, in a particular manner, to be applied to our infant-seed, whom it is our duty to devote to the Lord, as we receive them from him. Yet, there is this difference between the dedication of persons and the dedication of things, to God, that we are to devote the former to him in hope of their obtaining the blessings which they are at present capable of, or shall stand in need of from him hereafter. This, I think, is allowed by all Christians. Nothing is more common than for some, who cannot see it their duty to baptize their children, to dedicate or devote them to God by faith and prayer ; and this they do in a very solemn manner, and with expectation of spiritual blessings, as an encouragement of their faith, so far as they apprehend them to be capable of receiving them. Now baptism, in the general idea of it, is an ordinance of dedication or consecration of persons to God. If this be not allowed, I cannot see how it can be performed by faith, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; or how the observance of it can be a visible 'putting on of Christ,' as the apostle styles it.¹

It is objected that this proposition would not be denied, if baptism were to be considered as an ordinance of self-dedication. But then, we are told, it would effectually overthrow the doctrine of infant baptism ; for as infants cannot devote themselves to God in this ordinance, it is not, as an ordinance of self-dedication, to be applied to them. We reply, that as there is no other medium which, I apprehend, can be made use of to prove that the solemn act of consecration or dedication to God in baptism is to be made only by ourselves, but what is taken from an assumption of the question in dispute by those who assert that infants are not to be baptized ; so, if this method of reasoning were allowed, we might as well say, on the other hand, that infants are to be baptized, and that therefore baptism is not an ordinance of self-dedication, since they cannot devote themselves to God. Now, this would militate against what, I think, is allowed by all, that baptism, when applied to the adult, is an ordinance of self-dedication. Hence, what I would more directly assert in answer to the objection, is that baptism is an ordinance of dedication, either of ourselves or of others ; provided the person who dedicates, has a right to that which he devotes to God, and can dedicate it by faith. When I do, as it were, pass over my right to another, there is nothing required but that I can lawfully do it, considering it as my property ; and this is no less to be doubted concerning the infant-seed of believers than I can question whether an adult person has a right to himself, when he gives himself up to God in this ordinance.

It follows then, that parents, who have a right to their infant-seed, may devote them to God in baptism, provided they can do so by faith. Hence, a profession of faith is necessary only in those who are active in this ordinance, not in those who are merely passive. This we are obliged to maintain against those who often intimate that children are not to be baptized, because they are not capable of believing. Or, if we say that they are capable of having the seeds of faith, though not the acts of it, they who are opposed to us generally reckon this insufficient to support our argument ; inasmuch as it cannot well be determined what infants have the seeds of faith, and what not. I think, too, that those arguments which are generally brought to prove that the infants of believing parents, as such, have the seeds of faith, on the account of which they are to be baptized, can hardly be defended ; because many good men have wicked children. Hence, what we insist on in this argument is, that believing parents may give up their children to God in baptism, in hope of their obtaining the blessings of the covenant, whether they are able to conclude that they have the seeds of grace or not. They may devote them

to God in hope of regeneration ; though they cannot know them to be regenerate ; as all ordinances are to be performed with the view that they may be rendered effectual means of grace. Accordingly, as is observed in this Answer, infants descending from parents, either both or but one of whom profess faith in Christ, are to be baptized. For one parent has as much a right to the child as the other ; so that the unbelief of one does not exclude the other from giving it up to God by faith, in hope of its obtaining the saving blessings of the covenant of grace.

II. The right of the infant-seed of believers to baptism, may be farther proved from their being capable of the privileges signified in it, and under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which they who dedicate them to God make a public profession of, as agreeable to the design of this ordinance. None are to be excluded from any of those ordinances which Christ has given to the church, but they who, either in a natural or in a moral sense, are to be deemed incapable subjects of them. Some, indeed, are incapable of engaging in ordinances by reason of a natural unmeetness for them. Thus infants are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper, being under a natural incapacity ; and ignorant and profane persons are not to be admitted to it, being under a moral incapacity ; and, for the same reason, a wicked man, when adult, is not a proper subject of baptism. But if there be neither of these bars to exclude persons, they are not to be denied the advantage of any ordinance. This, I think, will be allowed by all. Hence, the only thing I need prove, is that infants are not incapable of the principal things signified in baptism. That they are not incapable of being dedicated to God, has been proved under the last Head ; and now we shall consider several privileges signified in baptism which they are equally capable of.

1. Baptism is an external sign of that faith and hope which he has who dedicates a person to God, that the person dedicated shall obtain the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Now, that infants are capable of these blessings, none will deny who suppose them capable of salvation. If we suppose infants not to have regenerating grace, which is neither to be affirmed nor denied, it being a matter at present unknown to us ; yet they are capable of having it, for the reason just assigned ; and though they cannot, at present, put forth any acts of grace, they will be capable of doing so as soon as they are able to discern between good and evil. They are not excluded by their infant state, from being under Christ's special care ; which is, doubtless, to be extended to elect infants as well as others. They are capable also of being discharged from the guilt of original sin ; and though they are not now capable of laying claim to this privilege, yet they may be enabled to do so afterwards. Now, if infants are capable of these privileges, certainly the person who dedicates them to God,—and who has a right to do so, inasmuch as they are his property, and he is able to dedicate them by faith—may devote them to God in the exercise of this grace, and in a fiducial expectation that they shall obtain these privileges. Indeed, when we engage in this ordinance, we ought, in consequence, to expect some saving blessings, as much as when we engage in any other ordinance of divine appointment.

It is objected that, though a person may devote his child to God in hope of his obtaining saving blessings, yet he cannot exercise any act of faith that he shall obtain them. It is hence inferred that, though he may perform this duty with a degree of hope, or at least of desire, yet he cannot do it by faith : so that if children are to be devoted to God by faith, they are not the subjects of this ordinance. But we reply, that some things may be said to be done by faith, when we have not a certain ground to expect saving fruits and effects. Suppose an infant expiring, and the tender parent concerned about its salvation, whether or not he has a certain expectation that it shall be saved, he may and ought to be earnest with God by faith and prayer, that the child may be happy when taken out of the world ; and if he finds that he has the lively exercise of faith with respect to this matter, he will possess some degree of hope that God, who excited this grace in him, will own it by giving the blessings which he desires ; which is the only comfort that a parent can take in the loss of his infant-seed. Now, may there not be this act of faith, when he dedicates him to God in baptism ? Did we assert that giving up our children to God by faith necessarily infers their obtaining saving blessings, the objection

would have some force. Or did we assert, that there could be no faith exercised without our being certainly persuaded that there should be a saving effect ; it might then be argued, that because we are not certain that infants shall be saved, we cannot give them up to God by faith. But if there may be faith, where there is not this certain persuasion, or any ground by which this matter may be determined, I think it will follow that infants may be devoted to God by faith, as well as with a desire of their obtaining saving blessings. Hence, the objection in question does not take away the force of our argument. We are far from supposing that baptismal dedication necessarily infers saving blessings, or is inseparably connected with them, so that the one cannot be without the other. It is sufficient to our purpose to suppose that infants are capable of those blessings which faith desires, and, it may be, hopes for, and consequently of those things which are principally signified in baptism.

2. Infants are under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which are incumbent on those who are given up to God in baptism, and which are signified by that ordinance. This respects some things future ; they being at present incapable of performing any duty. Indeed, obligations to perform duties may respect the time to come as well as the time present ; as when a person is bound to pay a just debt, the obligation is valid, though it is not expected that the debt should be immediately paid. Thus infants are professedly bound, when given up to God, to be the Lord's. Whether they will ever give themselves up to him by faith or not, is unknown to us ; yet the obligation will take place as soon as they are capable of doing good or evil. Hence, the parent may bind his child to be the Lord's, inasmuch as the obligation is just, being founded in God's right to obedience. And when he has laid his child under it in this ordinance, he ought afterwards strictly to charge him to stand to it, as he would not contract double guilt, in neglecting, not only to perform an indispensable duty, but to pay that debt of obedience which has been so solemnly acknowledged in this ordinance. These arguments, taken from the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, give me the fullest conviction concerning our warrant to apply it to infants. But,

3. It appears that the infant seed of believers are to be consecrated or devoted to God in baptism, because they are included in the covenant in which God has promised that he will be a God to his people, and to their seed. The latter are, on this account, styled 'holy.'^k Concerning Israel, it is said, that 'they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.'^l The 'branch' is said to be 'holy,' together with 'the root.'^m It is said, also, that 'the children of the promise are counted for the seed,'ⁿ that is, included in that covenant in which God promised that he would be a God to children, together with their parents ; as he says to Abraham, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and to thy seed after thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.'^o In this sense, I think, we are to understand the apostle's words, 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the' believing 'wife, and the unbelieving wife by the' believing 'husband ; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.'^p By these and other expressions of a similar nature, we are not to understand the special saving grace of regeneration and sanctification ; for that is not a privilege which descends from parents to children by birth ; as our Saviour says, 'We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'^q Hence, when some who are on the other side of the question, think that we intend hereby the saving blessings of the covenant, or that holiness which is an internal qualification or meetness for heaven, they do not rightly understand our meaning. Some, indeed, may have given occasion to conclude that they intend this, who speak of the grace of regeneration as conferred in baptism, and assert that that ordinance entitles persons to salvation, if they happen to die before they are adult, and that, if afterward they appear, by the wickedness of their conversation, to be in an unconverted state, they fall from grace. This is what I do not well understand ; nor do I intend, when I speak of the infants of believers as an holy seed, that they are all internally regenerated or sanctified from the womb. What I mean is, that they

k Ezra ix. 2.
o Gen. xvii. 7.

l Isa. lxvi. 23.
p 1 Cor. vii. 14.

m Rom. xi. 16.
q John i. 13.

n Chap. ix. 8.

are included in the external dispensation of the covenant of grace : which must be reckoned a greater advantage than if they had descended from Indians, who are strangers to it. I am sensible, indeed, that they who deny infant baptism, suppose that the holiness of the children spoken of by the apostle, in the scripture just referred to, who descended from parents of whom one only was a believer, implies nothing else but their being legitimate. But that does not seem to be his meaning ; for marriage is an ordinance of the law of nature, which all without distinction have a right to, heathens as much as Christians ; and the children of the one are as legitimate as those of the other. There is hence something else intended by their being ‘ holy,’ and this is the same thing which is meant in the other scriptures just referred to, which speak of an external relative holiness, whereby God must be supposed to have a greater regard to them than to others who are styled ‘unclean.’ Now, if this does not infer, as was before observed, their being internally regenerated or sanctified ; it is at least not a word without an idea affixed to it. We must hence understand by it, an holiness in the lowest sense of the word ; as children are said to be ‘an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb his reward.’^r Or it denotes the obligation they are laid under, by the privilege of their descending from believing parents, to adhere to their fathers’ God ; and this obligation, as has been already observed, is professed or acknowledged when they are dedicated to him in baptism. Such is the use which I would make of this account of them in scripture, to prove their right to be devoted to God in this ordinance.

Nor, I think, do we adopt the interpretation which we have given without some warrant from scripture. When God told Abraham, in the promise just mentioned, that he would be ‘a God unto him, and to his seed,’ which is the foundation of their federal holiness ; this is assigned as a reason why they should be devoted to God in circumcision ;^s for we cannot but conclude circumcision, as we do baptism, to have been an ordinance of dedication or separation to God. Again,^t when the apostle pressed the Jews amongst the mixed multitude to whom he had preached to ‘repent and be baptized,’ and encouraged them to hope for ‘the gift of the Holy Ghost ;’ he assigned as a reason, that ‘the promise was to them, and to their children,’ that is, the promise of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed ; and he adds, ‘and to them that are afar off,’ that is, the Gentiles, who might claim this promise when they believed, and whom the apostle calls elsewhere, ‘children of the promise, as Isaac was.’^u These, who are styled before conversion a people ‘afar off,’ were after it reckoned the spiritual seed of Abraham, and so had a right to the blessings of the covenant, that God would be a God to them. Now, by a parity of reason, in the same sense in which the seed of Abraham were children of the promise, the seed of all other believers are to be reckoned so, till, by their own act and deed, they renounce their external covenant relation. We may hence infer, that if they stand in this relation to God, their doing so is publicly to be owned ; and accordingly they are to be given up to him in baptism, there being in this ordinance a professed declaration of their covenant relation.

It has just been inferred, that as the infant seed of believers under the Old Testament had a right to circumcision, because they were included in the covenant which God made with their fathers ; so they have a right to baptism. Now, this inference is not to be wholly passed over ; though I am sensible, they who deny infant baptism will not allow it. Some have argued in opposition to it, that circumcision was ordained to be a sign and seal of that covenant of peculiarity which God made with the Jewish church, or of those blessings which they were made partakers of, as a nation excelling others, in name, honour, and glory. But this view of circumcision, I think, comes far short of what the apostle says respecting it, namely, that it was ‘a seal of the righteousness of faith.’^x Indeed, when we call that dispensation a covenant of peculiarity, we intend nothing else but some external privileges annexed to the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Hence, Abraham’s faith was conversant both on the righteousness of faith, which respected his own salvation and that of his spiritual seed, and on those privileges of a lower nature

^r Psal. cxxxvii. 7.^u Gal. iv. 28.^s Gen. xvii. 10.^x Rom. iv. 11.^t Acts ii. 39.

which they who were, in other respects, his seed, were made partakers of by virtue of the covenant in which God promised that he would be a God to him and to his seed. Moreover, it is generally denied by those who are on the other side of the question, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. This, therefore, remains to be proved, in order to our establishing the consequence, that as children were to be devoted to God by circumcision under the law, so they are to be devoted unto him by baptism under the gospel-dispensation. Now, that this may appear, let it be considered that God has substituted some ordinances, under the gospel-dispensation, for others which were observed under the ceremonial law. Thus the Lord's supper is instituted in the room of the passover; otherwise the apostle would never have alluded to the one when he speaks of the other, saying, 'Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast,'^y &c. Now, we have as much ground to conclude that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as we have that any gospel ordinance comes in the room of any other which belonged to the ceremonial law. For the apostle says, 'In whom ye are circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism.'^z Here he speaks of the thing signified by circumcision and of baptism as being the same, namely, our communion with Christ in his death; so that the thing signified by baptism, is styled, as it were, a spiritual circumcision. Now, as these two ordinances signify in substance the same thing, and are set the one against the other in this scripture, we may, I think, infer that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. Besides, as the first visible profession which the Israelites made, especially by any significant ordinance, that they were the Lord's, which is what we understand by an initiating ordinance, was made in the observance of circumcision; it follows that, if baptism is the only initiating ordinance under the gospel, as circumcision was under the law, it comes in the room of it; or else no other ordinance does. But if it be said that no ordinance comes in the room of circumcision, then the privileges of the church under the present dispensation, are, in a very disadvantageous circumstance, less than they were under the former; and if infants received any advantage by being devoted to God by circumcision of old, but are not to be devoted to him by baptism now, their condition is much worse than that of those who were the children of such as lived under the legal dispensation. We know, however, that God has not, under the present dispensation, abridged the church of its privileges, but rather increased them.

It is objected that infants have no right to baptism, because they cannot believe and repent. These graces, it is said, are often mentioned in scripture as a necessary qualification of those who have a right to this ordinance; as might be sufficiently proved from those scriptures in which persons are said first to believe and repent, and then to be baptized. Hence, in order to men's believing and repenting, and then being baptized, the gospel, according to our Saviour's direction,^a was first to be preached. We read also of persons 'gladly receiving' it, and 'then being baptized';^b and therefore Philip would not baptize the eunuch till he professed his faith in Christ.^c Moreover, say the objectors, baptism is called an ordinance of repentance: as none have a right to it but those who repent. Thus it is said, 'John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins';^d and elsewhere, that he 'baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'^e Now, we do not deny the necessity of faith and repentance to baptism in those who are adult. Under a foregoing Head, we considered that none are to be baptized if adult, till they profess faith in Christ and obedience to him; and that their profession ought to be accompanied with repentance, otherwise it is not true and genuine. We there freely owned also, that the gospel was to be preached by the apostles to those who were immediately concerned in their ministry, before either themselves or their infant-seed were to be baptized. Yet these concessions do not overthrow the doctrine of infant baptism; for that, as was before proved, depends upon different qualifications. Faith is, no doubt, necessary in the person who dedicates

y 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

c Acts viii. 37, 38.

z Col. ii. 11, 12.

d Mark i. 4.

a Mark xvi. 15, 16.

e Acts xix. 4.

b Acts ii. 41.

or devotes to God. But if, as has been stated, every one who is able to dedicate his child to God, by faith, is under obligation to do so,—as much as he who is able to dedicate himself to him by faith when adult, is bound to do it; then we are to have regard only to the faith of him who dedicates, and to hope for the saving privileges of faith and repentance, and all other graces, as divine blessings to be bestowed on the person devoted to God, as the great end which we have in view in this solemn action.

There is another objection, which is concluded by some to be unanswerable,—namely, that there is neither precept nor example in the New Testament, which gives the least countenance to our baptizing infants; so that it cannot be reckoned a scripture doctrine, and consequently is not from heaven but of men. We reply, that consequences justly deduced from scripture are equally binding with the words or examples contained in it. If this be not allowed, we shall hardly be able to prove many doctrines which we reckon to be, not only true, but of great importance. It would be endless to enter into a detail of particulars, to illustrate and confirm this matter; and I cannot but think it unnecessary, since they who deny infant baptism, do not deny the validity of just scripture consequences. Hence, all I need say is, that, if the method we have taken to prove infant baptism appears to be just, and if the premises be true, the conclusion deduced must be allowed, namely, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, though a command to baptize them is not found in express words in scripture. I cannot but think that the objection would equally hold good against Christ's dying for infants as well as others, or against their being capable of justification, regeneration, and the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. It might also be as well inferred that they are not to be devoted to God in other instances than that of baptism, or that we have not the least ground to expect their salvation; for it would be as hard to prove these points from express words of scripture as that they are to be baptized.

Here I cannot but take notice of the method which the learned Dr. Lightfoot takes to account for the silence of scripture as to this matter.^f It is, in substance, as follows:—He says, that baptism was well enough known to the Jews, as practised by them under the ceremonial law; by which he means the ordinance in general, as including a consecration to God, to worship him in the way which he then instituted; and accordingly they are said to have been 'baptized into Moses.' He adds, that the apostle, speaking concerning this matter, and referring to what was done 'in the cloud, and in the sea,'^g supposes that the whole congregation, of which the infants they had in their arms were a part, were solemnly devoted to God at that time. Now, this I cannot but conclude to be more agreeable to the sense of the word 'baptize,' than that which some critics give, who suppose that nothing is intended by it, but their being wet or sprinkled with the water of the sea, as they passed through it; for that was only an occasional baptism, which could not be well avoided. But, if I may be allowed a little to alter or improve on his method of reasoning, I rather think that the apostle's meaning is, that the whole congregation was 'baptized into Moses,' soon after they were delivered from the Egyptians, while they were encamped at the sea-shore. At that time, God, for their security, spread a cloud for a covering to them; and then, as the kind hand of providence had led the way, and brought them under a renewed engagement, they expressed their gratitude, and their obligation to be God's people, by their universal dedication to him in baptism. But, to return to the author just mentioned, he adds that, when Jacob was delivered from Laban, and set about the work of reforming his household, he ordered them, not only to 'put away the strange gods that were among them,' but 'to be clean';^h by which, as he observes, the Jews confess that baptism, or a dedication to God by washing, is intended. He also observes, that the ordinance of baptism in general, before Christ instituted gospel baptism, was so well known by the Jewish church, that they no sooner heard that John baptized, than they came to his baptism; and they did not ask him, 'Why dost thou make use of this rite of baptizing?' But, 'What is thy warrant, or 'Who sent thee to baptize?' He farther adds, that both John and Christ took up baptism as they found it in the

^f See his works, vol. ii. pages 1129, 1132, 1133.

^g 1 Cor. x. 2.

^h Gen. xxxv. 2.

Jewish church; by which he means the ordinance in general, without regard to some circumstances in which Christ's baptism differed from that which was practised under the ceremonial law. Now, this ordinance was, as he observes, applied by the Jewish church to infants as well as grown persons. Hence, our Saviour had no occasion, when he instituted this ordinance with those circumstances, agreeable to the gospel state, in which it differs from the baptism which was before practised, to command his apostles to baptize all nations, that is, all who were the subjects of baptism, and infants in particular.

It is farther objected that our Saviour was not baptized in his infancy; that his example is to be followed; and that, therefore, no one is to be baptized till he be adult. We reply, that every circumstance or action in the life of Christ is not designed to be an example to us. Indeed, there were some things signified in his baptism which are not in ours; inasmuch as in its application to him, it did not signify his being cleansed from the guilt and power of sin. The only thing in which what was signified in his baptism agrees with ours, is that he devoted himself to God; not, indeed, as expecting salvation through a Mediator as we do, but as denoting his consent to engage in the work for which he came into the world, which he now began to perform in a public manner, and which he fulfilled in the course of his ministry, while he went about doing good. Now, it was not convenient that this devotement of himself should be done in his infancy; for though the work of redemption began from that time, yet his proving himself to be the Messiah, especially his doing so in a public manner, did not take place till he was thirty years of age; and then he was baptized, that his baptism might be an ordinance for the faith of his church, that he was engaged in the work of our redemption. Moreover, it must be considered that John's baptism, which circumstantially differed from that which was practised in the Jewish church, as well as our Saviour's, was not instituted till the year before Christ was baptized. Hence, our Saviour could not be baptized agreeably to the alteration that was made in baptism at this time, had he been baptized in his infancy.

It is farther objected that infant baptism is a novelty, and was not practised by the church in the earliest ages from the apostles' time. But, even if this could be proved to be true, I should regard arguments deduced from scripture consequences much more than the sense of antiquity. The principal use of the writings of the fathers, in my opinion, is to lead us into the knowledge of what relates to the historical account of the affairs of the church in their respective ages. The main thing supposed in the objection is, that infant baptism was not practised in the early ages of the church. But the contrary to this will appear, if we consider some things mentioned by the fathers. Thus Justin Martyr says, that we have not received the carnal but the spiritual circumcision by baptism; and that all persons are enjoined to receive it, in like manner, as they were enjoined to receive circumcision of old. Here he refers to that saying of the apostle, 'We are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism.'ⁱ Hence he supposes that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. He likewise speaks of their being brought to the water, and there regenerated, by which he means, baptized, in the same manner as we are, in the name of the Father, our Lord and Saviour, and the Holy Ghost.^k Cyprian also, in a council in which there were sixty-six bishops convened—in answer to a question under debate, whether the time in which this ordinance was to be performed, ought to be the same with that in which children were circumcised under the law^l—delivered it, not only as his opinion, but as one which he supposes to have been received by all, that infants ought to be baptized before the eighth day. Irenæus^m speaks of Christ's sanctifying and saving persons of every age, infants not excepted; and says that they are therefore to be regenerated,—by which he means, baptized, as the fathers often put the thing signified for the sign. Gregory Nazianzen speaks to the same purpose,ⁿ that baptism may be performed as circumcision was, on the eighth day; but that it ought not to be omitted any

ⁱ Col. ii. 11, 12.

^k Vid. Just. Martyr, Quest. et Resp. Quest. cii. et ejusd. Apol. ii.

^l Vid. Cyp. in Epist. ad Fid. lib. iii. Ep. viii.

^m Vid. Iren. lib. ii. cap. xxxix.

ⁿ Vid. Ejusd. Orat. xl.

longer than till the children are two or three years old. I might add the testimony of Augustin, who asserts that the baptism of infants had been practised by the church, in foregoing ages, from our Saviour's time. Now, had this not been matter of fact, it would, doubtless, have been disproved by Pelagius and his other antagonists.^o

It is farther objected, by those who deny infant baptism, that the practice of many, in the ancient church, who deferred baptism till they were adult, argues that they did not think it lawful for any to be baptized in infancy. Thus Constantine the Great, as Eusebius observes, was not baptized till a little before his death. It is well known, also, that Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustin, and others of the fathers, were not baptized till they came to a state of manhood; and Tertullian, who lived in the second century, exhorts persons to defer baptism, and adds, that it is the safest way to delay the baptism of infants till they are capable of engaging for themselves, having arrived at years of discretion.^p But particular instances, or the sentiments of some of the fathers, are not sufficient to prove that infant baptism was not practised by the ancient church. As to what is alleged concerning Constantine not having been baptized till a little before his death, and Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, &c., not till they were adult, the facts may be accounted for, by supposing that their parents did not embrace the Christian religion while they were infants; so that they ought not to be baptized till they could give themselves up to God by faith. This a late learned writer attempts to prove.^q Moreover, some who have been converted, have neglected baptism, out of a scruple they have had of their unfitness for it, as many, in our day, do the Lord's supper. Others, it may be, might have neglected to baptize their infants, or to be baptized themselves till they apprehended themselves near death; being misled by a false supposition, which was imbibed by several, that baptism washed away sin, so that the nearer they were to their end, the more prepared they would be, by this ordinance, for a better world. But whether baptism was neglected for this or any other reason, does not much affect the argument we are maintaining; our design being principally to prove, that it was practised in the early ages of the church; and, in what instances soever it was omitted, it was not because they denied that the infants of believing parents had a right to it. As to several things mentioned by the authors before cited, and others who treat on the subject, whereby they seem to maintain the absolute necessity of baptism to wash away the pollution of sin, or as to their asserting that it is as necessary to salvation as regenerating grace, we have nothing to say to their sentiments. Yet whatever they speak in defence of infant baptism is a sufficient evidence that it is not a practice of late invention. As to Tertullian's advice, to defer baptism till persons were capable to engage for themselves, his caution argues that infant baptism was practised by some; and this is the principal thing designed to be proved. Besides, the reason he assigns for the neglect of baptism, is that the sureties who undertook to instruct the baptized in the doctrines of religion, often promised more than they made conscience of performing, and so brought themselves into a snare; and that hence, for their sakes, infant baptism, which could not be administered without sureties, had better be delayed. Now this proves only that he was against infant baptism for some prudential reasons; not that he thought it was in itself unlawful to be practised. We may conclude, therefore, that the objection taken from infant baptism being supposed to be a novelty, does not weaken the cause we are maintaining.^r Thus concerning the subjects of baptism.

^o Vid. Augustin. de peccat. merit. et remiss. lib. i. cap. xxviii. Parvulos baptizandos esse concedunt qui contra auctoritatem, universæ ecclesiæ proculdubio per dominum, et Apostolos traditam venire non possunt. And in Sermon. x. de verbis Apostoli, speaking concerning infant baptism, he says, Nemo vobis susurret doctrinas alienas: Hoc ecclesia semper habuit, semper tenuit; hoc a majorum fide percepti; hoc usque in finem perseveranter custodit.

^p Vid. Tertull. lib. de Baptism. cap. xviii.

^q See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, part ii. pages 52—86.

^r They who would see more on this subject may consult G. F. Voss. de Baptismo Disput. xiv. Forbes. Instruct. Hist. Theol. lib. x. cap. v. and Wall's History of Infant Baptism, vol. i.

The Mode of Baptism.

We are now to consider the mode of baptism, or what we are to understand by the word 'baptism.' It is said, in the foregoing Answer, to be the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There has been a great dispute in the world concerning the meaning of the word βαπτίζω, by which this ordinance is expressed; and from this dispute have arisen different modes of administration. Some think that the word signifies only the putting of a person or thing into water, so that it is covered, or as it were buried in it. This is otherwise expressed by the word 'dipping.' Others, whose opinion I cannot but acquiesce in, conclude that baptism may as well be performed by the application of water, though in a different manner, either by pouring or sprinkling. Accordingly, they think that the word signifies using the means of cleansing by the application of water, whatever be the form or mode. This argument depends very much upon the sense in which the word is applied to the action denoted by it, either in scripture or in other writings. But, as the sense of it, as used in scripture and other writings, is well explained by the learned and judicious Dr. Owen, agreeably to the view we have given of the word, I have no occasion to make any critical remarks upon it by referring to those writers in which the word is found.^s Besides, the greater number of Christians are not so well versed in the Greek language as to be able to judge whether those methods of reasoning, which are taken from the use of the word which we render 'baptize,' are sufficiently conclusive. Hence, when it is asserted that many who are undoubtedly very good masters of the Greek tongue, have determined that it signifies all manner of washing with water, as well as dipping into it, they will reckon any critical inquiry into the meaning of the word very fruitless and unprofitable. Yet, we are obliged to mention

^s See Dr. Owen's complete collection of sermons, pages 580, 581, of Dipping. He there observes that βαπτω, when used in Luke xvi. 24, and John xiii. 26, is translated 'to dip.' And, in Rev. xix. 13, where we read of 'a vesture dipped in blood;' it is better rendered 'stained,' by sprinkling blood upon it; and all these scriptures denote only a touching of one part of the body, and not plunging. In other authors it signifies, 'tingo, immergo, lavo, abluo;' but in no author does it ever signify to dip, but only in order to washing, or as the means of washing. As for the Hebrew word טבל, it is rendered, by the LXX. in Gen. xxxvii. 31, by μολυνω, 'to stain by sprinkling,' or otherwise, mostly by βαπτω. In 2 Kings v. 14, they render it by βαπτίζω, and nowhere else. In ver. 10, Elisha commands Naaman to wash; and accordingly, verse 14, pursuant to this order, it is said, 'he dipped himself seven times:' the word is ריטב; which the LXX. render εβαπτισατο. In Exod. xii. 22, where the word טבל is used, which we render dip, speaking concerning the dipping of the bunch of hyssop in the blood, the LXX. render it by the word βαπτω. In 1 Sam. xiv. 27, it is said that Jonathan dipped the end of his rod in an honey-comb; the word here is also ריטב, and the LXX. render it εβαψεν; in which place it cannot be understood of his dipping it by plunging. In Lev. iv. 6, 17, and chap. ix. 9, the priest is said to dip his finger in the blood, which only intends his touching the blood, so as to sprinkle it; and therefore does not signify plunging. This learned author likewise observes that βαπτίζω signifies to wash. Instances out of all authors may be given; and he particularly mentions Suidas, Hesychius, Julius Pollux, Phavorinus, and Eustachius. He adds, that it is first used in the scripture, in Mark i. 8; John i. 33; and to the same purpose, Acts i. 5, in which places it signifies 'to pour;' for the expression is equivocal, 'I baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost;' which is an accomplishment of the promise that 'the Holy Ghost should be poured on them.' As for other places, in Mark vii. 2, 4, νίπτω, which signifies to wash, and is so translated, is explained in the words immediately following, as signifying to baptize. And, in Luke xi. 38, it is said, that the Pharisee marvelled that our Saviour had not 'washed before dinner.' The word in the Greek is εβαπτισθη, to whom he replies in the following verse, 'Ye Pharisees make clean the outside,' &c., so that the word βαπτίζω signifies there 'to cleanse,' or to use the means of cleansing. Dr. Owen also observes that, though the original and natural signification of the word imports, to dip, to plunge, to dye; yet it also signifies to wash or cleanse. Yet he thinks that it is so far from signifying nothing else but to dip or plunge, that when it is to be understood in that sense, the word ought to be εμβαπτω, or εμβαπτίζω, rather than βαπτω, or βαπτίζω; and also, that it nowhere signifies to dip, but as denoting a mode of and in order to washing; and that it signifies to wash in all good authors. He also refers to Scapula and Stephanus, as translating the word βαπτίζω by 'lavo,' or 'abluo;' and Suidas, as rendering it by 'indefacio,' 'lavo,' 'abluo,' 'purgo,' 'munuo.' And he speaks of some authors that he had searched in every place wherein they mentioned baptism, and that he found not one word to the purpose; and therefore concludes, that he was obliged to say, and was ready to make it good, that no honest man who understands the Greek tongue, can deny that the word signifies to 'wash,' as well as to 'dip.'

the subject ; because great stress is usually laid on the sense of the word, to establish that mode of baptism which is always used by those who are on the other side of the question. I shall only add to what the learned Dr. Owen has observed, that it does not appear to me that the word βαπτίζω always signifies to wash, by dipping into water, but that it also means to wash by the application of water in some other way ; because it is sometimes applied to things which were too large and cumbersome, and therefore could not well be cleansed in that way. Thus it is said that the Pharisees ‘ held the washing,’ or, as it is in the Greek, the baptism not only ‘ of cups and pots, and brazen vessels,’^t which might, indeed, be washed by immersion, but of ‘ tables,’ or, as it may be rendered, of ‘ beds,’ or those seats on which the Jews, according to the custom of the eastern nations, lay at their ease when they eat their meals. These, I conceive, were washed in some way different from that of dipping or plunging in water ; and even if it were possible that they might be washed in that way, still the word may be applied to innumerable things which cannot be baptized by immersion. Hence, the general sense which we have given of it, that it signifies to wash, whether by dipping into the water, or by the application of water to the thing washed, may justify our practice with respect to the mode of baptism commonly used by us.

It is objected that the mode used by us is not properly baptism, but rantism ; or, that to sprinkle or pour, is not to baptize. But this method of begging the question in controversy, is never reckoned a fair way of arguing. If baptism be a using of the means of cleansing by the application of water, which is the thing we contend for, then the word ‘ baptize ’ may as well be applied to sprinkling or pouring as to any other mode of washing. Besides, if the thing signified by the action of baptizing, namely, the blood of Jesus, together with the gifts and graces of the Spirit which are applied to those to whom God makes baptism a saving ordinance, be sometimes set forth by sprinkling or pouring clean water upon a person, then it cannot well be concluded that sprinkling or pouring is not baptizing, though it differs very much from that which they who contend with us about this matter generally call baptizing. That the word sprinkling or pouring is sometimes used in scripture, to signify the conferring of those spiritual gifts and graces which are signified in baptism, is very evident. Thus it is said, ‘ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin ;’^u and the blood of Christ is called ‘ the blood of sprinkling.’^x In a spiritual sense, therefore, sprinkling is called cleansing from sin. Moreover, the graces of the Spirit conferred in regeneration, are represented by ‘ sprinkling clean water ;’^y and this mode of speaking would never be used, were not sprinkling a means of cleansing. Some think, too, that the apostle, when he speaks of our ‘ drawing near to God, having our bodies washed with pure water,’^z intends the ordinance of baptism ; and that he refers to the spiritual meaning of it when he speaks of having ‘ the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.’ But, if his words do not denote the ordinance of baptism, they at least allude to the ceremonial cleansings under the law, which were often performed by sprinkling. We cannot but assert, therefore, that sprinkling water in baptism, is as much cleansing as any other mode used. Moreover, sometimes the thing signified in baptism, is represented by a metaphor taken from pouring ; which, if our mode of baptizing be just, will not seem disagreeable to it. Perhaps, indeed, the explanation of the metaphor turns upon this mode of baptizing ; as the conferring of the Holy Ghost, which they who were baptized were given to expect, is often called ‘ pouring out the Spirit.’^a

There is another objection which is concluded by many to be unanswerable, namely, that when we read of baptism in the New Testament, the person baptized is said to have ‘ gone down into the water.’ This the eunuch did ;^b and immediately afterwards he is said to have ‘ come up out of the water.’ Now this language, it is supposed, can be applied to no other mode of baptism than that of immersion. The whole strength of this objection depends upon the sense which is given of the Greek particles which we often render ‘ into ’ and ‘ out of.’^c Hence,

^t Mark vii. 4.
^z Heb. x. 22.

^u 1 John i. 7.

^a Acts ii. 17, 18 ; chap. x. 45.

^x Heb. xii. 24 ; 1 Pet. i. 2.

^b Chap. viii. 38.

^y Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

^c *Est* and *ēē*.

the objection will have no weight with any but those who are unacquainted with the Greek language; for it is well known to all who understand it, that the former of these particles often signifies 'to,' as well as 'into,' and the latter 'from,' as well as 'out of.' Innumerable instances, were it needful, might easily be given from scripture and other Greek authors, in which the words are applied to things which, according to the natural signification, cannot be understood as denoting 'into' or 'out of.' There is one scripture which no one can suppose is to be taken in any other sense but what is agreeable to our present purpose, —namely, that in which our Saviour bids Peter 'go to the sea,^d and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh thence,'^e &c. Here, by 'go to the sea,' we can understand nothing else but, go to the sea-shore; and yet the word is the same as that which is, in some other places, rendered 'into.' There are other scriptures in which persons are said to 'go to the mountain,' or some other places, in respect to which it would be very improper to say, that they went into them; though the word is the same as that which in other instances we render 'into.' Again, the word^f which is sometimes rendered 'out of,' is frequently rendered 'from,' and can be understood in no other sense. Thus, when it is said, 'The queen of the south came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon;'^g the words cannot be understood of her coming 'out of' but 'from' the parts of the earth referred to. But, this matter being so well known to all who read the New Testament in the original, it is needless for me to give any other instances.^h As to the eunuch's 'going into the water,' I cannot think any thing else is intended, but that he descended or alighted from his chariot to the water, that is, by a metonymy, to the water-side, in order to his being baptized by Philip. It is no uncommon mode of speaking, to say that a person goes down to the river-side to take water, or to the well to draw it; so that the interpretation I have given is no strain on the sense of the word. I am the rather inclined to adopt this opinion that some modern travellers, taking notice of the place where the eunuch was baptized, intimate that it was only a spring of water, and therefore without sufficient depth to plunge the body in. Some ancient writers, who lived between three and four hundred years after our Saviour's time, as Jerome and Eusebius, intimate the same thing. If it be said, that these may be mistaken as to the place, inasmuch as the particular spot of ground in which this water was, is not mentioned in scripture; I will not lay much stress upon the matter. I cannot but observe, however, that the place is represented by a diminutive expression; for it is said, 'they came to a certain water,' that is, probably, a brook which was by the way-side; not a river, or a great collection of water. It is observed, too, that Philip, as well as the eunuch, 'went down into the water;' though none suppose that he was plunged in the water. It does not, therefore certainly appear, from the sense of the word, that the eunuch was plunged, unless the matter in controversy be taken for granted, that baptism can be performed in no other way than by plunging. Moreover, 'to go down to the water,' does not always signify, in other scriptures, going down to the bottom of the water. Thus, when the psalmist speaks of those who 'go down to the sea in ships,'ⁱ he does not mean those who go down to the bottom of it; so that going down to the water, does not always signify being plunged in it. As for what is said concerning Philip and the eunuch's 'coming up out of the water,' it may very fairly be understood of their returning from the water-side, and of the eunuch's going up again into his chariot. Besides, I cannot but think that, in this and all other places where persons are said to 'come up out of the water,' the expression denotes an action performed with design, and in the perfect exercise of the understanding on the part of him who does it. But this idea does not correspond with the situation of one who is at the bottom of the water, and cannot well come up thence, unless by the help of him who baptizes him. The sense which we have given of the words 'coming up out of the

^d Εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν.

^e Matt. xvii. 27.

^f Ex.

^g Luke xi. 31.

^h If any one has a mind to see how these particles, *εἰς* and *ἐκ*, are used in the New Testament, he may consult Schmid. Concord. in voc. *εἰς* and *ἐκ*, where there are a great number of places mentioned, in which these words are used; and it will hardly be thought, by any impartial reader, that the greater part of them can be rendered by 'into' or 'out of,' but rather 'to' or 'from.'

ⁱ Psal. cvii. 23.

water,' is agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour at his baptism, 'Jesus went up straightway out of the water.'^k But here there seems to be a mistake in our translation; for the words *απο του υδατος* should have been rendered 'from the water;' and the idea expressed by them is of the same import as the sense of the Greek particle *αν*, when a person is said to 'come up out of the water.'

It is further objected, that it seems very evident that John the Baptist used no mode but that of immersion; because he chose those places to exercise this part of his ministry in, which were well supplied with water, sufficient for this purpose. Accordingly, we first read of his removing from the wilderness of Judea, in which 'he preached the doctrine of repentance,' and told the people that 'the kingdom of heaven,' that is, the gospel-state, which was to begin with the appearing of the Messiah, 'was at hand;' then we read of his removing to the banks of the river Jordan, for the conveniency of baptizing those who came to him for that purpose; and afterwards, we read of another station in which he resided, namely, 'Ænon, near to Salim,' it being assigned as the reason that 'there was much water there.'^l Now, say the objectors, if he had baptized by sprinkling or pouring a little water on the face, he had no need to remove out of the wilderness of Judea; for whatever scarcity of water there might be there, it was no difficult matter for him to be supplied with enough to serve his occasion, had this been his mode of baptizing. But though John removed to Jordan and Ænon, that he might be well supplied with water, as he daily wanted large quantities of it; it does not necessarily follow, that he did this for the sake of practising immersion. Nor does it sufficiently appear to me, that Ænon afforded water deep enough for a person to be immersed; for it seems to have been but a small tract of land, in which it is hardly probable that there were many lakes, or rivers of water, which is as much as can be said concerning a well-watered country. I think, the words^m ought to have been rendered 'many waters;' by which we are to understand, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Ænon was a place of springsⁿ or small brooks of water. This place John chose that he might be supplied with water for his use; but it does not, I think, necessarily follow, that he baptized by immersion. Besides, if there had been a great collection of waters there, there would have been some indications of them at this day; but I believe, it would be hard to prove that there are any such. As to the other part of the objection, that it was a very easy matter for him to have been supplied with water in the wilderness of Judea, to baptize by sprinkling or pouring, by his having it brought to him in vessels for that purpose; we reply, that if he had only poured water on the head or face, there is no need to suppose that he was so sparing of it as not to use above a spoonful, especially when it was so easy a matter for him, by his removing to another station, to be better supplied. If there was but a little water poured on every one who came to be baptized by him, it would require a very great quantity of water to baptize the vast multitudes who came; for it is said, that 'Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized of him.' It is one thing for a little water to be brought in a bason to baptize a person or two, and another thing for this to be done in the case under consideration. Moreover, it is certain, that in hot countries, particularly in Judea, and more especially in the wilderness of that country, there was a very great scarcity of water. Accordingly, we read that sometimes water was so valuable a thing, that it was reckoned a very considerable part of a man's estate. Thus Isaac was envied by the Philistines for all the wells his father's servants had digged; and then we read of their stopping them up, and of his digging other wells; and also of the strife between the herdsmen of Gerar and his herdsmen, for the possession of them.^o We read likewise,^p that when Abraham sent Hagar away from him with Ishmael, he gave her bread, and 'a bottle of water;' and that 'when the water was spent in the bottle, she cast the child under one of the shrubs,' despairing of his life; which she needed not have done, if water was so easy to come by as is supposed in the objection. It is certain that a person may travel many miles in those desert places without finding water to quench his thirst. This far-

^k Matt. iii. 16.
vol. i. page 500.

^l John iii. 23.
^o Gen. xxvi. 14—20.

^m ὕδατα πολλὰ.

ⁿ See Lightfoot's works,
^p Gen. xxi. 14—16.

ther appears from Samson's having been 'ready to die for thirst,' after the great victory he obtained over the Philistines. On that occasion, God wrought a miracle to supply him,^a a fact which can hardly be accounted for, if there had been as great plenty of water in that country as there is in ours. The scarcity of water, then, I apprehend to have been the reason of John's removal to Jordan and Ænon; so that that removal does not necessarily prove that his design was to baptize in the way pleaded for by those on the other side of the question. Moreover, as it does not sufficiently appear to me, from any thing contained in the objection, that John used immersion in baptism; so it seems most agreeable to some circumstances which attended it, to conclude that he did not. There was, for example, no conveniency for the change of their garments, nor servants appointed to help them in changing them; though attention to this matter would seem to have been necessary to answer the occasion. Some have supposed, too, that immersion might endanger the health of those who were infirm among them; and especially that John's health would be endangered, who was obliged to stand many days together in the water, or at least the greater part of each day, while he was administering this ordinance. They who were baptized must immediately have retired when the ordinance was over, or their health would have suffered; unless we have recourse to a dispensation of providence, which must have been next to miraculous. I am sensible, indeed, that some say that none ever suffered by being immersed in baptism in our day; and if the observation be true, it is a kind providence which they ought to be thankful for.

But if, after all that has been said on this matter, it will not be allowed that baptism signifies any thing else but dipping in water; then I might farther allege that it might be done by dipping the face, which is the principal part of the body, without plunging the whole body. This might answer the design of the ordinance as well as the other; since it is not the quantity used in a sacramental sign, which is so much to be regarded as the action performed, together with the matter of it. If the smallest piece of bread, and a spoonful of wine are used in the Lord's supper, they are generally reckoned as well-adapted to answer the design of the ordinance, as if a great quantity of each were received by every one who partakes. Now, as to our present argument, the washing of a part of the body is deemed sufficient to signify the thing intended, as much as if the whole body were washed. We see an illustration of this in the instance of our Saviour's washing his disciples' feet. When he told Peter, that 'if he washed him not, he had no part in him,'^r he called washing his feet, washing him, by a synecdoche, of a part for the whole; and when Peter replied, 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,' Jesus answered, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'^s Here, I think, he means that the action signified that the cleansing, which is the spiritual meaning of washing, was as complete as if the whole body had been washed with water; for though one design of the action might be to teach the disciples humility and brotherly kindness, yet it also signified their being washed or cleansed by his blood and Spirit.

There is another objection on which very much stress is generally laid, which I should not do justice to the cause I am maintaining, if I should wholly pass over. This objection is taken from these words of the apostle, 'So many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death. Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'^t From this passage it is argued that there ought to be a similitude between the sign and the thing signified, and, consequently, that baptism should be performed in such a way that, by being covered with water, there might be a resemblance of Christ's burial, and by being lifted up out of the water, a resemblance of his resurrection. Hence, say the objectors, this ordinance signifies not only the using of the means of cleansing with water, but the mode, namely, being plunged, or as it were buried, in water. We reply, that it is not agree-

q Judges xv. 18, 19.

r John xiii. 5, &c.

s Ver. 10.

t Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.

able to the nature of a sacramental sign in any other instance, that there should be an analogy between the thing done, and what is signified by it, any otherwise than by divine appointment. Accordingly, we observed under the foregoing Answer, that a sacrament has not a natural tendency to signify Christ and his benefits. Thus eating bread and drinking wine do not signify the body and blood of Christ, any otherwise than as this signification is annexed by our Saviour to the action performed. Now, the same, I think, may be applied to baptism; especially our consecration and dedication to God in it. If any other external sign had been instituted, to signify the blessings of the covenant of grace, we should have been as much obliged to make use of it as we are of water. I conceive, then, that the apostle, in this scripture, refers, not to our being buried in water or taken out of it, as a natural sign of Christ's burial and resurrection, but to our having communion with him in his burial and resurrection. This, I think, would hardly be denied by many on the other side of the question, did not the objection just mentioned, and the cause they maintain, render it expedient for them to understand the words in another sense.^u

I forbear to say more as to the subjects and the mode of baptism. As I should have been unfaithful had I said less; so I have not the least inclination to treat in an unfriendly way those who differ from me, having a just sense of their harmony with us, especially a great part of them, in those doctrines which have a more immediate reference to our salvation.

Abuse of the Ordinance of Baptism.

As there are some who appear to be grossly ignorant of the thing signified in baptism, who seem to engage in it as though it were not a divine institution, concluding it to be little more than an external rite or form to be used in giving the child a name, and induced to observe it rather by custom than by a sense of the obligation they are under to give up their children to God by faith; so there are others who attribute too much to it. They assert that infants are regenerated by it; and that if they die before they commit actual sin, they are undoubtedly saved, inasmuch as they are by baptism made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This opinion seems to be an ascribing of that to the ordinance, which is rather expected or desired in it than conferred by it.

As for the child being signed with the sign of the cross, signifying hereby that he should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but should manfully fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; how much soever these duties may be a branch of that baptismal obligation which he is professedly laid under, I cannot see what warrant persons have to make use of this external sign and symbol; for it can be reckoned no other than an ordinance for their faith, though destitute of a divine institution.

There is another thing practised by some in baptism which is greatly abused, namely, requiring that some should be appointed as sureties for the child. These personate it, and engage, in a solemn manner, in its behalf, that it shall fulfil the obligation which it is laid under. They thus not only undertake more than what is in their power to perform; but, the greater part of them, it is to be feared, hardly think themselves obliged to show any concern about the children afterwards. What is farther exceptionable in this matter is, that the parents, who are more immediately obliged to give their children up to God, seem to be, as it were, excluded from having any hand in the matter. I have nothing to except against the origin of this practice; which was in the second century, when the church was under persecution. The design of it was laudable and good, namely, that if the parents should die before the child came of age, so that it would be in danger of being seized by the heathen, and trained up in their superstitious and idolatrous mode of worship, the sureties promised, that they would deal with it as if it were their own child, and bring it up in the Christian religion. Yet this kind and pious concern for its welfare might have been better expressed at some other time

^u See Sect. 'The Covenant of Grace as made with Man,' under Quest. xxxi; and Sect. 'Examination of Arguments for Universal Redemption,' under Quest. xlv.

than at its baptism; and so have prevented it from being thought an appendix to that ordinance. Now, however, through the goodness of God, the children of believing parents are not reduced to those hazardous circumstances; and therefore the obligation to have sureties is less needful. But to vow, and not perform, is not only useless to the child, but renders that only a matter of form which the sureties promise in this sacred ordinance to do.

The only thing I shall add under this Answer, is, that if we have been baptized, either in our infancy, or when adult, we are obliged, in faithfulness, as we value our own souls, to improve it to the glory of God, and our spiritual welfare in the whole conduct of our lives. And this leads us to what is contained in the following Answer.

[NOTE Y. *The Connexion of Discipleship and Baptism.*—The verb μαθητεύω, both from its etymology, and from the use made of it in passages in which it occurs, certainly appears to mean ‘to make disciples,’ or ‘to disciple.’ If a person is disciplined to Christ, or placed in the ranks of Christian discipleship, by being drawn out from the world, and brought, in real or presumptive position, into connexion with the work and cause of the Saviour, he may clearly be said to be disciplined, if an adult, when he makes a firm and consistent profession of faith in Christ, and if an infant, when his interest in the work of the Redeemer is recognised, and his circumstances are such as afford a warrant, should he survive his infantile state, of his being ‘brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ Though we cannot know who among infants shall die in infancy, and who among them shall live till years of understanding; yet we must recognise infants as such, or all of mankind who, by dying in infancy, are distinctively of the infantile class, as partakers of the great salvation, and as ranking with believers in Christ. See Note headed ‘Infant Salvation,’ appended to Quest. xxvii. Sect. ‘The Condition of those who die in Infancy.’ Now while, on this ground, we do not seem warranted to regard all infants whatever as in a state of discipleship, we certainly do seem warranted—and not only warranted, but commanded—to regard all as eligible to be put into that state,—and to be put into it simply by being brought to the Saviour. ‘Then were there brought unto Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence;’ (Matt. xix. 13—15;) or, as another evangelist reports, ‘he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them,’ Mark x. 16. Here little children or infants are distinctly commanded to be brought to Christ,—to be brought to him, on the ground that ‘of them is the kingdom of heaven;’ and, in connexion jointly with their being of the class who as such, or dying in infancy, are all saved, and with their being brought to the Redeemer, they have conferred upon them external marks of his favour as distinguishing as any which he ever conferred upon adults who professed to renounce the world and follow him,—they are taken into his arms, have his hands placed upon them, and receive his blessing. Are they not, then, placed truly and literally in the condition of discipleship? The very language used in reference to their being brought to Christ, is, in fact, exactly that which the scriptures currently employ in reference to the discipling of adults. ‘Suffer little children to come unto me,’ said the Saviour in reference to infants; and, ‘Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,’ he says in reference to adults. For an adult, therefore, to renounce idolatry and irreligion, and make an open and credible profession of attachment to the Saviour, seems to be no more, as to the position into which it puts him, or the external character with which it invests him, than for an infant to be brought to Christ,—to be carried to him to receive his blessing,—to be placed in circumstances in which he shall, from the first openings of his understanding, hear the Saviour’s name, and witness the true worship of God, and enjoy the benefits of evangelical instruction. An infant in these circumstances, then, or one who is born of devout parents, or who is daily commended to God in prayer by devout guardians, or who breathes the same air with a true Christian who tends him, and watches over him, and ‘gives him to the Lord,’ is really disciplined,—he is in the school of Christ,—he ranks, not with a community of idolaters or of practical infidels, but with the community of those who have said, ‘We are the Lord’s, and have called themselves by the name of Jacob; who have subscribed with their hand unto the Lord, and surnamed themselves by the name of Israel,’ and to whom the Most High has promised, ‘I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses,’ Isa. xlv. 3—5.

If infants brought to Christ, then, are disciplined, what follows but that they must be baptized? The command is, ‘Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ The discipling appears clearly to be quite distinct from both the baptizing and the teaching, and to be the basis, the antecedent, or the limit of their being administered. Persons, in the first instance, are to be brought to Christ,—to be inducted into his school,—to be led into a fair profession of adhesion to him, if adults, and placed in circumstances of Christian nurture, if infants; and then, as many as are thus disciplined, are to be baptized or made subjects of the initiatory Christian ordinance, and afterwards taught all those lessons which are suitable to the condition of Christian discipleship. The apostles, in other words, were commanded, in our Lord’s commission, to make disciples, to administer baptism, and to instruct believers,—to draw men into the condition of Christ’s followers, to organize them into churches, and to impart to them all the elements and details and higher departments of a believer’s knowledge. According to Mark, indeed, the first

part of the commission was, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark xvi. 15. But we are not, from this reading in Mark, to infer, as Dr. Ridgeley does, that preaching the gospel and discipling are convertible terms,—and still less, that discipling all nations is the same thing as 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded,' *Κηρυσσειν το ευαγγελιον*, the phrase used by Mark, and translated to 'preach the gospel,' is, as every one admits, of radically the same import as the verb *ευαγγελιζειν*: indeed, both, when the latter is used in reference strictly to the gospel, are capable only of one and the same translation. Now, it is said respecting Paul and Barnabas at Derbe, 'When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had disciplined many, *ευαγγελισαμενοι τι την πολιν εκεινην, και μαθητευσαντες ικανους*, they returned again to Lystra.' Here preaching the gospel and discipling are quite distinct: the former had reference to 'the city,' or the general body of the inhabitants, while the latter had reference only to 'many,' or to such of the inhabitants as were induced to renounce Judaism or idolatry, and profess apparently sincere adoption of the Christian faith. Discipling, therefore, was not the work of preaching the gospel, but the aim of those who engaged in it, and the outward or visible result of their labours. The apostles are hence said, by one evangelist, to have been commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature,—and, by another evangelist, to have been commissioned to disciple all nations, simply because they are viewed by the former in reference to their work itself, and by the latter in reference to its object,—or by the one in reference to the means they should employ, and by the other in reference to the end they should accomplish. Discipling and preaching are related to each other as a work and its result, or as an instrument and its effect. Nor is discipling, on the other hand, to be identified with 'teaching all things whatsoever Christ had commanded.' The apostles themselves were made disciples when they knew only the general truths respecting the work and person of the Messiah, and were called disciples, and treated as such during the whole period of their learning his detailed commands, or his particular instructions regarding the nature of his kingdom and the duties of his subjects. If discipling were effected only by 'teaching all things whatsoever Christ has commanded,' or by men's acquiring all the particulars of Christian knowledge, no persons whatever could, in any propriety of language, be viewed as disciples till they join 'the spirits of the just made perfect,' or till at least they become old men and fathers in Christ. But if the teaching mentioned in the apostolic commission be distinct from discipling, so also is baptizing. Either baptizing men and teaching them all things must jointly constitute the discipling of them, since the two are mentioned conjointly after the command to disciple; or they must both be distinct from it, and subsequent to it, in order and occurrence. Discipling, therefore, being manifestly distinct from the 'teaching of all things,' it is no less distinct from baptizing; nor, as I have already shown, is it less distinct from preaching the gospel. It follows the last of these, and precedes the first and the second. The order of the four is, preaching the gospel, discipling, baptizing, and teaching all things which our Lord has commanded. What, then, is discipling,—what can it be but bringing men into the position of disciples of the Saviour,—drawing them away from the world, and attaching them to his cause,—attracting them from the school of error and delusion, and placing them in the school of the Redeemer? But all adults who make a consistent profession of believing the gospel, and all infants who are brought to Christ, or placed in circumstances to be 'trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' are thus disciplined. What follows, then, but that all such infants, as well as adults, are to be baptized,—the command being, 'Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?'—ED.]

THE IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM.

QUESTION CLXVII. *How is our baptism to be improved by us?*

ANSWER. The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long; especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it; the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein, by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism and our engagements, by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament, by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace, and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit, into one body.

Our obligation to improve Baptism.

In explaining this Answer we may observe that our baptism, together with the engagements which we are therein laid under to be the Lord's, is to be improved by us. This duty is too much neglected. As baptism is an ordinance or means of grace for our attaining spiritual blessings, we are not only guilty of a sinful neglect, but we lose the advantage which might otherwise be expected, if we do not

improve it so as to answer its valuable end. And when we consider it as a professed dedication to God, or as a bond and obligation laid on us to be entirely and for ever his, it cannot but be reckoned the highest affront offered to the divine Majesty, and a being unsteadfast in his covenant, for us practically to disown the engagement, or, in effect, to deny his right to us.

Now, it is farther observed, that this duty is much neglected; and the reasons of neglecting it are various. Many have very low thoughts of this ordinance, and understand not its spiritual intent or meaning, or what it is to improve it. These reckon it no more than an external rite, established by custom, and commonly observed in a Christian nation, without duly weighing the end and design for which it was instituted, or what is signified by it. Others suppose that there is nothing in it but a public declaration, that the person baptized is made a Christian, or has that character put upon him. They know not what it is to be a Christian indeed, being utter strangers to the life and power of religion, and the spiritual blessings hoped for in our baptismal dedication, or, through the grace of God, consequent upon it. Others have, indeed, right apprehensions of the sign and the thing signified; yet, through the prevalence of corruption, and the pride and deceitfulness of their hearts, they do not fiducially give themselves up to God, nor desire the spiritual and saving blessings of the covenant of grace. These, therefore, do not improve their baptism; and it is to be feared, that this is the condition and character of the greater number of professors.

How Baptism is to be improved.

We are thus led to consider how baptism is to be improved by us. We shall notice this in several instances.

1. We are to improve baptism when we are present at the administration of it to others. We are not, indeed, at that time, so immediately concerned in the ordinance, as the person who is publicly devoted to God in it, yet we are not to behave ourselves as unconcerned spectators.

We are to join in the celebration of the ordinance with suitable acts of faith and prayer, as the nature of the ordinance calls for them; and to adore the persons in the Godhead, whose name and glory are mentioned in it. We are also to apply ourselves to God for the grace of the covenant which is signified by it, that he would be our God, as well as the God of the person who is particularly given up to him in baptism. We are likewise to bewail the universal depravity of human nature, and that guilt which we bring with us into the world, which is signified in infant baptism. This, together with the habit of sin which we have contracted, is confessed by those who are baptized when adult, which we cannot but see a great deal of in our daily experience. We ought also to entertain becoming thoughts of the virtue of the blood of Christ, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, which alone can take away the guilt of sin, and render this ordinance effectual to salvation; and we are to desire, not only with respect to the person baptized, but with respect to ourselves, that we may be made partakers of that grace which they and we equally stand in need of.—Again, we ought to confess before God, with sorrow and shame, how defective we have been, as to the improvement of our baptismal engagements,—that, though we have been devoted to him, our hearts and affections have been very prone to depart from him. And we ought to adore and acknowledge the goodness and faithfulness of God, in that, though we have been unsteadfast in his covenant, through the treachery and deceitfulness of our hearts, yet he has been ever mindful of that covenant, and made good its promises to all his servants who have put their trust in him.

2. Our baptism is to be improved by us, in the time of temptation, in order to our resisting it, and preventing our being entangled and overcome by it. If the temptation takes its rise from the world, or we are induced from our prosperous circumstances to lay aside or be remiss in our duty to God, we should consider that, in having been devoted to God in our infancy, or in having given ourselves up professedly to him when adult, it has been intimated and acknowledged that he is our portion, better to us than all that we can enjoy in the world. Hence, we ought to acquiesce in him as such, and say, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and

there is none,' or nothing, 'upon the earth that I desire besides thee.'^x—Moreover, if we are tempted to be uneasy and to repine at the providence of God, by reason of the many evils which befall us in the world, we ought to consider that, when we were given up to God, we came under an implied obligation to be content to be at his disposal, and to be satisfied with whatever he allots for us, not questioning the care and justice of his providence, in which we were under an indispensable obligation to acquiesce. Hence, when God tries us, by bringing us under various afflictions, our baptismal engagement obliges us to say, 'It is the Lord, let him do with us what seemeth good in his sight.'—Again, if we are exposed to the temptations of Satan, or those inward suggestions whereby sinful objects are presented to our thoughts, and a false gloss put upon them to induce us to desire them, we are to improve our baptismal engagement, by considering that it contains a solemn acknowledgment of God's right to us, exclusive of all right to us on the part of others. We hence shall dread the thoughts of submitting to be vassals to Satan, which is, in effect, to disown that allegiance which we owe to God, and to say that other lords shall have dominion over us; and we shall feel induced to adhere steadfastly to God, as the result of our having been devoted to him in this ordinance.—Further, if we are afraid of being ensnared by those wiles and methods of deceit which Satan often makes use of, and which are not always discerned by us, we are to consider that we have been devoted to Christ in baptism, and that—if we have, in any instance, improved this solemn transaction—we have given ourselves up to him, in hope of being under his protection, and interested in his intercession, so that though we are 'sifted as wheat,' our 'faith may not fail.'^y—Moreover, when we are assaulted, and, as it were, wounded with Satan's fiery darts, whereby great discouragements are thrown in our way, the guilt of sin magnified as though it were unpardonable, and the stain and pollution of it represented to be such as can never be washed away; and when we are ready to conclude that our state is hopeless, and that the comforts we once enjoyed are irrecoverably lost; we are to improve our baptism by considering that remission of sins was the blessing desired and hoped for in our observing the ordinance, inasmuch as it was signified by it. We are hence to be sensible that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that, as we were given up to him in hope of obtaining this privilege, and have been enabled since then to give ourselves up to him by faith, and by doing so to improve our baptismal engagement, so we trust that he will appear for us, rebuke the adversary, establish our comfort, and enable us to walk as those who desire to recommend his grace to others, that they may be encouraged to adhere to him, by the comfortable sense which we have of his love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

3. Our baptismal engagement is to be improved by us, before and after we are brought into a converted state. Unregenerated persons are to improve it, as it should afford them matter of deep humiliation that, though they have been devoted to God, and called by his name, and made partakers of the external blessings of his covenant, yet they have been alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the internal saving blessings of the covenant. There was a profession made in baptism, that they stood in need of Christ's mediation to deliver them from the guilt of sin, and of being cleansed from the pollution of it, which is of a spreading nature; but they have, notwithstanding, given way to it, and, how pure soever they have been 'in their own eyes, are not yet washed from their filthiness.'^z Now, such may take occasion from their baptismal engagement to plead earnestly with God for converting grace. Their receiving of this is the only means whereby they may know that he has accepted of their solemn dedication to him; or that they are born not only of water but of the Spirit, and are made partakers of the thing signified in baptism, without which the external sign will not afford any saving advantage. We may also plead with God, that as we are professedly his, he would assert his own right to us, overcome us to himself, and make us 'willing in the day of his power.'^a

Again, if we are brought into a state of grace, our baptismal engagement is con-

x Psal. lxxiii. 25.

y Luke xxii. 31, 32.

z Prov. xxx. 12.

a Psal. cx. 3.

stantly to be improved by us, in order to the growth and increase of grace. If, especially, we are sensible of great declensions in it, or that it is not, in all respects, with us as it once was ; if we are sensible of deadness and stupidity in holy duties, and stand in need of being quickened, excited, and brought into a lively frame of spirit, or to be restored after great backslidings ; if we would have sin mortified, and its secret workings in our heart subdued ; we ought to consider that, having been ‘ baptized into Jesus Christ,’ we were ‘ baptized into his death,’ and that we are in consequence obliged to ‘ walk in newness of life,’ so that ‘ sin should not reign in our mortal bodies.’^b If we hope and trust that we are made partakers of the saving blessings signified in this ordinance, we then desire to improve the relation we stand in to Christ, as a matter of encouragement that, when we are oppressed, he will undertake for us. If we are destitute of assurance of his love, and of our interest in him, we are to improve the consideration of our being his, not only by professed dedication, but by a fiducial adherence to him ; and our doing so will encourage us to hope that he will enable us to walk holily and comfortably before him, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as our reconciled God and Father. Moreover, in the whole course of our conversation, it will be of use for promoting the life of faith, which consists in an entire dependence on him as those who are sensible that we can do nothing without him, to consider that, when we were first devoted to him, it was acknowledged, and from the time when we were enabled to give ourselves up to him by faith, we have been always sensible, that we stand in need of daily supplies of grace from him, as all our springs are in him. Our baptismal engagement is further to be improved, as it is an inducement to us to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness. Practical religion will be promoted in all its branches, when we consider that we are not our own, and therefore dare not think of living as we list, or of serving divers lusts and pleasures, but that we are obliged to make his revealed will, whose we are and whom we desire to serve, the rule of all our actions. Lastly, we ought to walk in brotherly love, as being ‘ baptized by the Spirit into one body.’^c They who are partakers of the saving blessings signified by baptism, have ground to conclude themselves members of Christ’s mystical body, or of the invisible church of which he is the head. This is a spiritual baptism, being the effect of divine power, and the special work of the Holy Ghost ; and certainly it will be an inducement to all who are partakers of it, to walk together in brotherly love, as those who are favoured with the same privileges, and hope to enjoy that complete blessedness in which they who were before devoted to Christ shall be for ever with him. Thus concerning the ordinance of baptism.

^b Rom. vi. 3, 4, 12.

^c 1 Cor. xii. 13.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

QUESTION CLXVIII. *What is the Lord's Supper?*

ANSWER. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate, feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, have their union and communion with him confirmed, testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

QUESTION CLXIX. *How hath Christ appointed bread and wine to be given and received in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?*

ANSWER. Christ hath appointed the ministers of his word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to set apart the bread and wine from common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer, to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants, who are, by the same appointment, to take, and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance, that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed for them.

QUESTION CLXX. *How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper, feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?*

ANSWER. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal, or carnal, but in a spiritual manner, yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

WE are now led to speak concerning the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This is considered either absolutely in itself, or as compared with baptism. Accordingly, it is inquired, wherein these ordinances agree or differ. In considering the nature of the Lord's supper, it is farther inquired, how they who are to partake of it ought to prepare themselves for it before they engage in it. There are also two cases of conscience answered: the one respects those who are not satisfied concerning their meetness for observing the ordinance; the other respects those who ought to be kept from it, however desirous they may be to partake of it. We have also an account of the duties of communicants while they are engaged in this ordinance; or those that are incumbent on them after they have attended on it. These things are particularly insisted on in the Answers which we are now led to consider, and in some others which follow. In explaining them we shall observe the following method. First, we shall notice the general description of this ordinance, as it is called a sacrament of the New Testament; and here we shall be led to speak concerning the person, our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom it, in common with other ordinances, was instituted. Secondly, we shall consider the persons by whom the Lord's supper is to be administered, namely, the ministers, or pastors of particular churches; inasmuch as it is an ordinance given only to those who are in church-communion. Thirdly, we shall consider the matter of it, or the outward elements, namely, bread and wine. Fourthly, we shall consider the minister's act, antecedent to the church's partaking of this ordinance, in setting apart the elements from a common to a sacred use; which is to be done by the word and prayer, joined with thanksgiving. Fifthly, we shall notice the actions, both of the minister and of the people: the one breaks the bread, and pours out the wine, in order to their being distributed among those who are to receive them; the other, namely, the communicants, partake of them, and join with him in eating the bread and drinking the wine. Sixthly, we shall consider what is signified by this ordinance, namely, the body and blood of Christ: these are supposed to be, not corporally and carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of the receivers; and on this account, they may be said to feed upon the body and blood of Christ, and to apply the benefits of his death to themselves. Lastly, we shall notice the persons who hope to enjoy these privileges, and partake of the Lord's supper in a right manner: these are said worthily to communicate; and here we shall consider also the ends which they

ought to have in view, namely, their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, their enjoying communion with Christ, and that love which they are obliged to express to one another as members of the same mystical body.

The Lord's Supper an Ordinance of the New Testament.

We are first to consider, then, that the Lord's supper is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by our Saviour. That it is an ordinance, is evident from the fact that it is founded on a divine command; and that it is so founded, appears from the words of institution, 'Take, eat, this is my body; and he took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it,'^d &c. Its being founded on divine authority is intimated also by the apostle, when, speaking particularly concerning it, and the manner in which it is to be observed, he says, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.'^e Moreover, there is a blessing annexed to our partaking of it in a right manner. This may plainly be inferred from the apostle's distinguishing those who receive it 'worthily' from others who receive it 'unworthily,' or in an unbecoming manner. The former are said to 'come together for the better,' the latter 'for the worse';^f and to partake of the Lord's supper for the better, is to partake of it for our spiritual advantage, which supposes that there are some blessings annexed to it which render it not only a duty, but an ordinance or means of grace. Again, that it is a gospel ordinance of the New Testament, appears from the time of its being instituted by our Saviour, as well as from the end and design of it. It is particularly intimated that Christ instituted this ordinance immediately before his last sufferings, as a memorial of his dying love. Thus the apostle says, 'The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread.'^g And that it was designed to continue as a standing ordinance in the church throughout all ages, appears from what he adds, 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.'^h

Some modern enthusiasts, however, deny it to be an ordinance, as they also do baptism; concluding that no ceremony, or significant sign, is consistent with the gospel dispensation. As for our 'showing forth the Lord's death till he come,' they suppose that by this phrase is meant, till he come by the effusion of the Spirit; and they hence infer that if it was an ordinance at first, it ceased to be so when the Spirit was poured forth on the church, in the beginning of the gospel dispensation. Now, in reply to this opinion, and the reasons assigned for it, let it be observed that ceremonial institutions are not inconsistent with the gospel dispensation. They may not be designed to signify some benefits to be procured by Christ, as those did which were instituted under the ceremonial law; but they may be considered as rememorative signs of the work of redemption, which has been brought to perfection by him. Again, when the apostle, in the scripture just mentioned, says, 'we show the Lord's death till he come,' his words cannot be meant concerning our Lord's coming in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit; inasmuch as this privilege was conferred on the church in the apostle's days, at the very time when he speaks of their showing forth his death. Hence, he doubtless intends by the expression Christ's second coming, when this ordinance and all others which are now observed in the church, as adapted to its present imperfect state, shall cease. We must conclude, therefore, that the Lord's supper was designed to be continued in the church in all ages, as it is at this day.

By whom the Lord's Supper is to be Administered.

We are now to consider the persons by whom this ordinance is to be administered. These are only such as are lawfully called, and set apart to the pastoral office, whose work is to feed the church, not only by the preaching of the word, but by the administration of the sacraments, which are ordinances for the church's faith, in which they are said to receive and spiritually feed upon Christ and his benefits. Hence, God promises to 'give his people pastors according to his own

d Matt. xxvi. 26, 27.
g 1 Cor. xi. 23.

e 1 Cor. xi. 23.
h Verse 26.

f Verse 17.

heart, who should feed them with knowledge and understanding.'ⁱ Now, that none but these are appointed to administer this ordinance, is evident from the fact that they who partake of it are said to have communion with him and with one another in it for their mutual edification and spiritual advantage. It hence belongs, not to mankind in general, but to the church in particular. And, to prevent confusion, Christ has appointed one or more proper officers in his churches, to whom the management of this work is committed; who are called to it by the providence of God, and the consent and desire of the church to whom they are to minister.

The Elements used in the Lord's Supper.

We are now to consider the matter or the outward elements to be used in the Lord's supper. These are bread and wine. Thus it is said, 'Jesus took bread;'^k and 'he also took the cup.' Here 'the cup' is, by a metonymy, put for the wine; for our Saviour, referring to this action, speaks of his 'drinking the fruit of the vine.'^l As to the bread which is to be used in this ordinance, there was a very warm debate between the Latin and the Greek church concerning it. The former, as the Papists do at this day, regard it as absolutely necessary that it should be unleavened bread, inasmuch as that kind of bread was used by our Lord when he instituted the ordinance; for the time at which he did so was that of the passover, when no leaven was to be found in their houses. Those who advocate this opinion also make the unleavened bread a significant sign of the sincerity and truth with which the Lord's supper ought to be eaten; for which they refer to these words of the apostle, 'Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'^m But there seems here to be an allusion only to the use of unleavened bread in the passover; which, it may be, might have a typical reference to that sincerity and truth with which all the ordinances of God are to be engaged in. Nor does it sufficiently appear that the apostle intends that the bread used in the Lord's supper should be of this kind, or that it was designed to signify the frame of spirit with which this ordinance is to be celebrated. On the other hand, the Greek church thought that the bread ought to be leavened, according to our common practice at this day, it being the same that was used at other times. This opinion seems most eligible, as it puts a just difference between the bread used in the passover, which was a part of the ceremonial law, and that used in a gospel institution, which is distinct from it. But, I think, there is no need to debate either side of the question with too much warmth, it being a matter of no great importance. As for the wine which is to be used in this ordinance, it is a necessary part of it; and hence the Papists are guilty of sacrilege in withholding the cup from the common people.ⁿ [See Note Z, page 524.]

The Setting Apart of the Elements in the Lord's Supper.

We are now to consider what the minister is to do antecedent to the church's partaking of the Lord's supper. He is to set apart the outward elements of bread and wine from a common use to this particular holy use. On this account, the elements may be said to be 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer.'^o The words of institution contain an intimation that these elements are to be used in the ordinance by Christ's appointment; for without that appointment, no significant sign could be used in any religious matters. As for prayer, the offering of it is agreeable to Christ's practice; for he 'took bread and blessed it,' or prayed for a blessing on it. It appears, too, from the apostle's words, that this action was accompanied with thanksgiving, 'When he had given thanks, he brake it;'^p and the giving of thanks is agreeable to the nature and design of the ordinance, as

ⁱ Jer. iii. 15.

^k Matt. xxvi. 26.

^l Ver. 29.

^m 1 Cor. v. 8.

ⁿ This was done by the council at Constance, A. D. 1415. Before that time, indeed, there were several disputes about the matter or form of the cup, in which the wine was contained; but the cup was never taken away from the common people till then.

^o 1 Tim. iv. 5.

^p Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 24.

herein we pray for the best of blessings, and express our thankfulness to God for the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Here I cannot but observe how the Papists pervert this ordinance in the manner of consecrating the bread: This the priest does only by repeating these words in Latin: 'This is my body.' They thence take occasion to advance the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation; and suppose that, by these words pronounced, the bread is changed into the body and blood of Christ. This they assert contrary to all sense and reason, as well as the end and design of the ordinance. For, from this opinion it will follow, that man has a power to make the body and blood of Christ. Another consequence of it will be that the human nature of Christ is omnipresent; an idea which is inconsistent with a finite nature, and with those properties which belong to it as such, and from which it is to be concluded that his human nature is nowhere but in heaven. Besides, there is the greatest contradiction in supposing that it is bread, as having all the qualities of bread, while our senses are so far imposed on that we must believe that it is not so, but Christ's body. The opinion also supposes that Christ has as many bodies as there are consecrated wafers in the world; which is a monstrous absurdity. It likewise confounds the sign with the thing signified, and is very opposite to the sense of those words of scripture, 'This is my body.' For the words imply no more than that the bread, which is the same in itself, after the words of consecration that it was before, is an external symbol of Christ's body, that is, of the sufferings which he endured in it for his people. [See Note 2 A, page 525.]

The Actions performed in observing the Lord's Supper.

We are now to consider the actions both of the minister and of the church, when engaged in the Lord's supper, namely, breaking, distributing, eating the bread, pouring forth and drinking the wine, for the ends appointed by Christ in instituting this ordinance. Whether our Saviour gave the bread and wine to every one of the disciples in particular, is not sufficiently determined by the words of institution. For though Matthew and Mark say, 'He gave the bread and the cup to the disciples;'^a Luke, speaking concerning either the cup used in the passover, or that in the Lord's supper, represents our Saviour as saying to his disciples, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves.'^r Now, these words seem to intimate that he distributed it to one or more of them, to be conveyed to the rest, that they might divide it among themselves. This corresponds with the practice of several of the reformed churches in our day, and seems most expedient when the number of the communicants is very great, and the elements cannot be so conveniently given by the pastor into the hand of every one.

Here I may observe how the Papists pervert this part of the Lord's supper. They will not permit the common people to touch the bread with their hands, lest they should defile it; but the priest puts it into their mouths. For this purpose it is made up into small, round wafers; and the people are ordered to take great care that they do not use their teeth in chewing it, and are told that to do so would be, as it were, a crucifying of Christ afresh, as offering a kind of violence to what they call his body. But these things are so very absurd and unscriptural, that they confute themselves. And their consecrating a wafer to be reserved in a case prepared for that purpose, and set upon the altar in the church to be worshipped by all who come near it, savours of gross superstition and idolatry.—We may farther observe, that they deny the people the cup in this ordinance, but not the priests; for what reason it is hard to determine. They also mix the wine with water. This custom, though it does not seem to be agreeable to Christ's institution, was often practised by the ancient church, whence the Papists took it. But their making it a sacramental sign of Christ's divine and human nature, united in one person, is much more unwarrantable. Nor can I approve of what others suppose, namely, that it signifies the blood and water which came out of his side, when he was pierced on the cross.—Moreover, I can hardly think some Protestants altogether free from

the charge of superstition, when they so tenaciously adhere to the use of red wine, as bearing some small resemblance to the colour of Christ's blood. Others choose to bear their testimony against this ungrounded opinion, by the using of white wine, without supposing that any thing is signified by it more than by red; and others choose to use one sort at one time, and another at another, to signify that this is an indifferent matter. The latter, I think, are most in the right.—Again, the practice of the Papists and some others, in receiving the Lord's supper fasting, in order that the consecrated bread may not be mixed with undigested food, is not only unwarrantable, but superstitious, as well as contrary to our Saviour and his apostles having partaken of the Lord's supper at its institution, immediately after having eaten the passover, and to what the apostle suggests, when he reproves the church at Corinth for eating and drinking to excess immediately before they partook of the Lord's supper, advising them to 'eat and drink,' though with moderation, 'in their own houses.'^s—Further, the administering of the Lord's supper privately, as the Papists and others do, to sick people, seems to be contrary to the design of its being a church ordinance. And when, to give countenance to this practice, it is styled, as by the Papists, 'a viaticum,' or a means to convey the soul, if it should soon after depart out of the body, to heaven, they are much more remote from our Saviour's design in instituting this ordinance; nor do they rightly understand the sense of the scripture whence they infer the necessity of it, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,'^t when they apply it to this purpose.

There is another thing which must not be wholly passed over, namely, the various gestures used in receiving the Lord's supper. The Papists not only receive it kneeling, but they allege that they ought to do so, being obliged to adore the body and blood of Christ, which, as they absurdly suppose, is really present, inasmuch as the bread is transubstantiated, or turned into Christ's body and blood. The Lutherans, with equal absurdity, assert that the body of Christ is really, though invisibly, present in the bread; and this they call consubstantiation. Some other Protestants, indeed, plead for the receiving of the Lord's supper kneeling, supposing Christ to be spiritually, though not corporally, present in it. They do not worship the bread and wine, but our Saviour; and this, they suppose, they ought to do with the becoming reverence of kneeling. What I would take leave to say on this subject, is, that we humbly hope and trust that Christ, according to his promise, is present with his people in all his ordinances; yet it is not supposed that we are obliged to engage in every one of them kneeling. But what determines the faith and practice of all reformed churches who do not use this gesture in the Lord's supper, is, that it is contrary to the example of our Saviour and his apostles when it was first celebrated; for that example ought to be a rule to the churches in all succeeding ages. It may be said, that this is a gesture most agreeable to prayer, or at least that sitting is not so. But the Lord's supper is not an ordinance principally or only designed for prayer; for whatever prayers we put up to God in observing it are short, ejaculatory, and mixed with meditations, and they may be performed with an awful reverence of the divine Majesty, such as we ought to have in other acts of religious worship, though we do not use the gesture of kneeling. Besides, we think ourselves obliged to receive the Lord's supper sitting, that being a table gesture in use among us, in the same manner as that which our Saviour and his apostles used was among the eastern nations. As for the reformed Gallican churches, they receive the Lord's supper, for the most part, standing; which, being a medium between the extremes, they suppose to be most eligible. But this not being a table gesture, and so not conformed to that which was used by our Saviour and his apostles, I cannot think it warrantable. Some, however, make the gesture of standing or sitting a significant sign. The former they regard as a sign of our being servants, ready to obey the will of Christ, our great Lord and Master, or, as others explain it, a sign of our being travellers to the heavenly country; and the latter, or sitting, they regard as a sign of our familiarity or communion with Christ. But these opinions are rather the result of human invention, than founded on a divine insti-

^s 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22.^t John vi. 53.

tution ; for we have not the least account in scripture of such things being signified by the gesture used.

What is Signified in the Lord's Supper.

We are now led to consider the thing signified in this ordinance, and in what respect Christ is said to be present in it, together with the benefits expected from him, as we are said to feed upon him by faith for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. I cannot but think that the general design of the ordinance is not much unlike that institution of the ceremonial law which ordained that, after the sacrifice was offered, part of it should be reserved to be 'eaten in the holy place.'^u This was a significant feast upon a sacrifice. In like manner, the Lord's supper, which comes in the room of the passover, is ordained to be a feast on Christ's sacrifice. So the apostle speaks of it when he says, 'Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us ; therefore, let us keep the feast,'^x &c. The fiducial application of Christ and the benefits of his death, is the principal thing to be considered in this gospel festival. There are, however, some cautions necessary to be observed with respect to the things signified in it, which may be useful to us in directing us how our faith may be exercised in a right manner.

1. Though the Lord's supper was instituted in commemoration of Christ's love, expressed in his death, which was the last and most bitter part of his sufferings for our redemption ; yet he did not design by it to exclude his other sufferings in life, nor, indeed, his whole course of obedience from his incarnation to his death. For, it is very evident that the death of Christ is often considered in scripture, by a synecdoche, as denoting his whole course of obedience, both active and passive, which is the matter of our justification. Hence, the whole of his obedience is to be the object on which our faith is to be conversant in the Lord's supper, as well as his sufferings in or immediately before his death.

2. When Christ's sufferings upon the cross are said to be signified by the bread and wine, we are not to conclude that these sufferings are to be so distinctly or separately considered that the bread broken is designed to signify the pains which he endured upon the cross, when his body was as it were broken, its tendons, nerves, and fibres snapped asunder, and his joints dislocated, by being stretched on the cross, and the wine poured forth to signify the shedding of his blood, when his hands and feet were pierced with the nails and his side with the spear. For all these things are to be made the subject of our affectionate meditation in every part of this ordinance, while we are taken up with the contemplation of his last sufferings. That they should thus be jointly meditated on seems to give countenance to the practice of many of the reformed churches, in consecrating and distributing the bread and wine together. It is true, many think, on the other hand, that the elements are to be separately consecrated, as well as separately distributed, this practice being most agreeable to what is said concerning Christ's blessing the bread and giving it to his disciples, and afterwards taking the cup and giving it to them.^y Still, if this be allowed, it is not necessary for us to infer that each of the elements is designed to signify some distinct part of Christ's sufferings on the cross ; but only that the ordinance is to be continued, the whole including two external and visible signs, each of which signifies the means whereby he procured our redemption. Indeed, when the wine is poured forth, and set apart for another part of this ordinance, we are not so much to enter on a new subject in our meditation, though the sign is different from that of the bread, as to proceed in thinking on and improving the love of Christ, in his 'humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'^z Now, all this is signified by this sign, as well as the other ; and neither of them is adapted to this end, otherwise than by divine appointment.

3. We must take heed that we do not make more significant signs in the bread and wine than Christ has done. Some suppose that almost every ingredient or action used is to be applied to signify some things which he did or suffered for our

^u Lev. vi. 16.

^x 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

^y Matt. xxvi. 26, 27.

^z Phil. ii. 8.

redemption. It is a very great liberty which some take in expatiating on this subject, and applying it to this ordinance. We have a specimen of this in a hymn, composed to be sung as a thanksgiving after receiving the Lord's supper.^a In that hymn the corn, as first living and growing, and afterwards cut down, and by thrashing, separated from the husk, and then ground in the mill, and baked in the oven, are all made significant signs of the sufferings and torments which our Saviour endured. The corn being united in one loaf, is made a sign of the union between Christ and his church. In like manner, the grapes being gathered, pressed, and made into wine, is supposed to signify our spiritual joy, arising from Christ's shedding his blood. Many grapes making one vine, is also supposed to signify that believers should be united by faith and love. What lengths is it possible for the wit and fancy of men to run, when they have a fruitful invention, and are disposed to make significant signs, and apply them to this ordinance without a divine warrant!

4. When we meditate on Christ's sufferings, our faith, as Dr. Goodwin observes,^b is not principally to be fixed on the grievousness of them. We are not to endeavour only to have our hearts moved to a relenting, and compassion expressed towards him, and indignation against the Jews who crucified him, together with an admiring of his noble and heroical love displayed in his sufferings. Some persons, if they can get their hearts thus affected, judge and account what they feel to be grace; whereas, it is no more than what any similar tragical story of some great and noble personage, full of heroic virtues and ingenuity, yet inhumanly and ungratefully used, does ordinarily work in ingenuous spirits, who read or hear of it. When our contemplation of Christ's sufferings reaches no higher than this, it is so far from being faith, that it is but a carnal and fleshly devotion, and such as Christ himself, at his suffering, found fault with, as not being spiritual, when he said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children,'^c that is, not so much for my being thus unworthily handled by those for whom I die, as for yourselves. Moreover, it was not the malice of the Jews, the falseness of Judas, the fearfulness of Pilate, the iniquity of the times he fell into, that wrought our Saviour's death. God the Father had a higher design in that event; and this our faith is constantly to be conversant about, considering the death of Christ as the result of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, and of that covenant which he came into the world to fulfil, and of his being made sin for us, to take away our sins by atonement. We may add, that the highest and most affecting consideration in Christ's sufferings, ought to include the idea of his being a divine person; which is the only thing that argued them sufficient to answer the great ends designed by them, as it rendered them of infinite value; and it was on this account that his condescension, expressed in his sufferings, might truly be said to be infinite. These things, I say, we are principally to rest in, when we meditate on Christ's sufferings in this ordinance; though the sufferings themselves, which are exceedingly moving and affecting in their kind, are not to be passed over; since the Holy Ghost has, for this end, given a particular account of them in the gospels, not merely as an historical relation of what was done to Christ, but as a convincing evidence of the greatness of his love to us. Thus concerning Christ's death, showed forth or signified in this ordinance.

We are farther, under this Head, to consider how Christ is present, and how they who engage in it aright feed on his body and blood by faith. We are not to suppose that Christ is present in a corporal way, so that we should be said to partake of his body in a literal sense. But he being a divine person, and consequently omnipresent; and having promised his presence with his church in all ages and places, when met together in his name; in this respect he is present with them, just as he is in other ordinances, to supply their wants, hear their prayers, strengthen them against corruption and temptation, and remove their guilt by the application of his blood, which is presented as an object for their contemplation in a more peculiar manner in this ordinance. As for our feeding on or being nourished by

^a This hymn is inserted after Sternhold and Hopkins' version of the Psalms.

^b See Dr. Goodwin's *Christ set forth*, § 2. chap. ii.

^c Luke xxiii. 28.

the body and blood of Christ, these are metaphorical expressions, taken from and adapted to the nature and quality of the bread and wine by which Christ's body and blood are signified. What we are to understand by them is, our graces being farther strengthened and established, our being enabled to exercise them with greater vigour and delight, and our deriving these blessings from Christ, particularly as founded on his death. Our being said to feed upon him, in particular, denotes the application of what he has done and suffered, to ourselves; and, in order to this, we are to bring our sins, with all the guilt which attends them, as it were, to the foot of the cross of Christ, confess and humble our souls for them before him, and by faith plead the virtue of his death, in order to our obtaining forgiveness, and, at the same time, renew our dedication to him, while hoping and praying for the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace which were purchased by him.

There is another thing signified in this ordinance, as a farther end for which it was instituted,—namely, we are to have communion with one another, and thereby to express our mutual love as members of Christ's mystical body, who have the same end in view, and make use of the same means, namely, Christ crucified, as we attend on the same ordinance in which this is set forth, and have the same common necessities, infirmities, and corruptions, and the same encouragements for our faith. Hence, we ought to sympathize with one another, and, by faith and prayer, be helpful to those with whom we join in this ordinance, while we are representing our own case in common with theirs, before the Lord.

The Qualifications of Communicants.

We are now led to consider what ought to be the qualifications of those who have a right to the Lord's supper, and are obliged to partake of it. These are expressed in general terms, by the apostle, by 'discerning the Lord's body.'^d Now, this a person cannot do, who is ignorant of the design of his death; so that there must be some degree of knowledge in those who are qualified for this ordinance. There must also be an afflictive sense of the weight and burden of the guilt of those sins which are daily committed by us, and an apprehension arising thence of our need of the merits of Christ to take them away, and that his death is designed to answer this end. And, that the ordinance may be observed for our real advantage, as we are said to feed on Christ by faith, it is supposed that this grace is wrought in us, or that we are effectually called out of a state of unregeneracy to partake of gracious communion with Christ; whereby we may be said to be fitted to have fellowship with him in this ordinance, and so partake of it in a right manner, for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

d 1 Cor. xi. 29

[NOTE Z. *Half Communion.*—Romanists defend their practice of withholding the cup in the ordinance of the Lord's supper from the laity, chiefly by arguments which assume the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and which, in consequence, beg not only the question at issue, but another question of higher import. When they say that the wafer is a whole Christ, and does not need to be accompanied by the cup,—that the putting of the cup into the hands of the laity would endanger 'the spilling of the blood,' or expose it to sacrilegious or unsanctified usage,—that whole communion could not be practised consistently with due attention to a supreme adoration of both the blood and the wafer,—they do little else than exhibit some awkward consequences which follow from their doctrine of transubstantiation, and furnish tools which might be effectively used for uncasing that doctrine, and laying open its deformity.

They say, however—as an argument founded on the highest authority—that our Lord, in instituting the eucharist, gave the cup to the apostles in their official capacity, and not as church-members, and therefore gave it to them alone. But how came our Lord's form of address, when giving the cup, to be exactly the same as when giving the bread? Did he give the bread also to the apostles officially, and so make no institution whatever of the ordinance for the people? What authority, too, have the Romish *priests* to take the cup? Are they the apostles, or even their successors? Besides, the principle on which the argument—or rather the allegation—rests, would set aside almost every divine command. For if it were admitted that the command, 'Drink ye all of this cup of the new covenant in my blood,' was addressed to the apostles alone, it might, with equal justice, be maintained that the decalogue, or written moral law, was addressed to the Israelites alone,—the charges as to being 'wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,' to the seventy alone,—the commission to carry the gospel to kings and princes, to Paul alone,—the command, 'Give thyself to reading,' to Timothy alone,—the injunctions as to church-order and discipline and rules

of prophesying, to the Corinthians alone,—and most of our Lord's discourses, especially the consolatory discourse on the eve of his passion, to the twelve alone. All the Bible was, in the first instance, addressed to particular communities and individuals, except, only the Catholic epistles; and even these were addressed to Christians of the first century, residing within certain limits. Yet *all* scripture is authoritative to every person in every age to whom it comes, and is profitable to 'the man of God,' or every individual who believes it, that he may be 'thoroughly furnished unto every good work.' 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through faith and patience of the scriptures, might have hope.'

Another argument in favour of the practice of half communion, is founded on the disjunctive 'or,' in the words, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread, or (ἢ) drink this cup of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xi. 27. But the words, in order to suit the purpose for which they are quoted, would require to be, 'Whosoever eateth of this bread, or whosoever drinketh of this cup.' As they stand, they contain only one nominative to both clauses, and can designate only one party,—who, therefore, both 'eats' and 'drinks.' Besides, if the argument founded on them were conceded, it would prove half communion as truly by using the cup to the exclusion of the bread, as by using the bread to the exclusion of the cup; and would, in consequence, upset all the usages, and some of the opinions, which the Church of Rome has connected with the withholding of the cup from the laity.—Again, the Corinthians, to whom the words in question were primarily addressed, communicated in both kinds,—'What!' says the apostle, 'have ye not houses to eat and to *drink in*?' Not *some* of them appear to have communicated in both kinds, but *all*.—Further, an exact parallel to the words occurs just two verses after, and it there stands, 'He that eateth and *drinketh*,' καὶ πινων. Indeed, in a compass of eight verses, within which the words in question lie, the phrase 'eateth and *drinketh*' occurs five times, and is implied as many times more,—proving, along with the entire scope of the passage, that, to observe the eucharist at all, was to observe it in the way of communion in both kinds.—Finally, the verse to which the Romanists appeal is the only one on the subject in which the disjunctive 'or' is found; and even it, in several manuscripts of the New Testament of considerable authority, is read with the copulative 'and.'

A very brief summary of arguments against half communion will serve to expose it. The Church of Rome practised communion in both kinds till the 15th century; and yet, in the teeth of a total alteration of her practice, she affects and boasts to be 'semper eadem.' Half communion was first decreed by the council of Constance; and, before that period, is proved by liturgies, catechisms, canons, papal bulls, and all history, to have been unpractised and unknown.—Christ instituted and gave the cup exactly as he did the bread,—'in like wise,' or 'after the same manner,' ὡσαύτως; (1 Cor. xi. 25; Luke xxii. 20;) and, in consequence, placed them on equal footing, or made the use of them of co-extensive obligation. Nor did he only give the cup, but commanded it to be used in the same manner as the bread, saying, in reference to the one, as he said in reference to the other, 'This do in remembrance of me,' 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.—The cup, besides, possesses a distinctive character or object in the ordinance, and must be used in order to the due significancy of the eucharist being realized. Our Lord, in reference to the bread, says, 'This is my body broken for you;' but, in reference to the cup, says, 'This is the new covenant in my blood;' and while he leaves the use of the former to be connected simply or specially with faith in his atonement, he directs the use of the latter to be associated with the *hope* of heaven,—saying, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,' Matt. xxvi. 29. The use of the bread, therefore, fixes the attention particularly on the atonement; and the use of the cup fixes it, in addition, on the ratifying or establishing by our Lord's death of the everlasting and well-ordered covenant of mercy, and on the glorious and celestial results which follow in the experience of his people.—Again, the practice of the apostolic churches, in communicating in both kinds, is mentioned in scripture in an authoritative manner, or with assumption of its correctness. 'The cup of blessing which we bless,' says Paul, 'is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,' 1 Cor. x. 16; xi. 23.—Finally, communion in both kinds is directly commanded. 'As often,' says the Lord by his apostle, 'as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, show ye the Lord's death till he come,' 1 Cor. xi. 26. The act here stated is 'eating the bread and drinking the cup,' and the duty enjoined is 'showing the Lord's death;' but as the duty consists simply in performing the act in a right spirit or with a proper motive, it necessarily includes the act, and, therefore, renders 'the drinking of the cup' as really imperative as 'the eating of the bread.'—ED.]

[NOTE 2 A. *Transubstantiation*.—The Romanists pretend to understand the words, 'This is my body,' literally; yet they read them, or construct upon them the doctrine of transubstantiation, as if they stood, 'This is my body, and blood, AND SOUL, AND DIVINITY!' If this be a fair example of literal interpretation, they may, even from texts, about the meaning of which there is no dispute, easily prove any dogma of their creed, or almost any conceivable point which they may choose to adopt. The saying of the apostle Peter, for example, 'I also am an elder,' might, in a strictly parallel way, be read, 'I also am an elder, and a *prelate*, or the bishop of Rome, AND THE HEAD OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH ON EARTH, AND THE INFALLIBLE VICEGERENT OF CHRIST!' But who would call this literal interpretation? Yet it is exactly such literal interpretation as is put upon the words, 'This is my body,' in order to bring out of them the doctrine of transubstantiation.—The idiom of scripture, however, does not allow the words to be understood literally in reference to the mere *body* of Christ. 'The *kine are* seven years,' 'the *candlesticks are* the churches,' 'the *rock was* Christ,' 'the *field is* the world,'—are phrases in accordance with current scripture language, and, along with a multitude of their class, prove the substantive verb to be used in the sense of 'signify,' 'symbolize,' or 'represent.'—Besides, when the verb *υπαρχει* bears its radical or substantive signification, it means existence in the ab-

strait, and is not employed to denote existence in the sense of *having become*. Had our Lord's words comported with the idea that the bread had been transubstantiated into his body, they would, I presume, have been, not *τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα μου* but *τοῦτο γίνεσθαι* or *τοῦτο γενέσθαι τὸ σῶμα μου*. The Syriac language—that most probably in which our Lord addressed the disciples when instituting the supper—did not, I believe, contain a verb corresponding to our word 'signify,' or 'represent,' and, like the Hebrew and the Hebraistic Greek, always employed the substantive verb when the idea expressed by that word was intended. But even our own language—rich though it be in verbs to denote every phasis of the idea of representing—very often employs 'is' in the sense of 'represents.' How often do we say, pointing to a book, a picture, or an artificial mark on a map, 'This is Homer'—'this is Newton'—'this is London!'—Again, what shall be said respecting our Lord's words when giving the cup.—'This cup is the new covenant in my blood?' 1 Cor. xi. 25; Luke xxii. 20. If, in the language he employed when instituting the eucharist, the part which referred to the bread is to be literally understood, the part which referred to the wine must—not only in common consistency, but in order to sustain the Romish belief in the transubstantiation of both elements—also be literally understood. Just, then, as the words in the one case are construed to mean that the bread in the eucharist is transubstantiated into Christ's body, so must the words in the other case be construed to mean that *the cup* is transubstantiated into *the new covenant*! Every man who knows the meaning of words revolts from this consequence, yet sees it to be fair; and he will, therefore, conclude that, in the very nature of the case, the language used in instituting the eucharist was figurative.—Finally, The context of the words of institution expressly assumes that no change, no transubstantiation, took place on the bread and wine. Our Lord, after, as the Romanists say, he had *consecrated* the wine, or after he had 'blessed' or 'given thanks,' distinctly called the contents of the cup, '*this fruit of the vine*;' (Matt. xxvi. 29; Mark xiv. 25; Luke xxii. 18;) and the apostle Paul, speaking also of the bread after *consecration*, or after 'blessing,' or 'giving thanks,' and even speaking of it when in the process of being eaten, distinctly calls it '*this bread*,' 1 Cor. xi. 27; x. 16, 17. See also Acts ii. 42; xx. 7.

Dr. Ridgeley confutes the doctrine of transubstantiation by pointing out some of the absurdities or impossibilities which it involves. In addition to those he mentions—that it represents a creature as making his Creator, the human nature of Christ as omnipresent, the bread and wine to retain all their native properties while they are totally changed in substance, and the bodies of Christ to be as numerous, and in as many places entire and complete, as there are consecrated wafers,—I may observe that it assumes the five senses to be concurrently deceived, the capacity of the mouth or stomach of a communicant to be literally immense, the same thing to be in the same sense only one and yet thousands, the body of Christ to be at once of its proper size, of the size of a mere wafer, and of the size or capacity of ubiquity. But an absurdity quite as great, though not, at first sight, so obvious as any, is to say that the most wondrous of all miracles, the transubstantiation of bread into the Saviour, takes place without anything occurring to overawe or even attract the senses, and that the Lord of glory is literally present with his people on earth in the same incarnate and glorified state in which the disciples saw him ascending up into heaven, amid such an utter absence of any mark, or token, or manifestation of his presence, that witnesses have no other intimation of the fact than the sound of a little bell rung by an officiate of the place! Miracles recorded in the Bible were all manifest, sensible, glorious, and deeply affecting changes; and even when of small import compared with what is alleged in transubstantiation, they so displayed the Saviour's glory as, not only to arrest in the strongest manner the attention of his disciples, but to command their faith, John ii. 11.

Christ's body. Dr. Ridgeley remarks in the way of further refutation, "is nowhere else but in heaven." 'Whom the heaven,' says the apostle Peter, 'must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,' Acts iii. 21. Nor is Christ's human nature any more connected, as the doctrine of transubstantiation represents it, with the state of being offered up in sacrifice. 'But this man,' says Paul, 'after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool,' Heb. x. 12, 13. His manhood, besides, is of a nature or substance, not which originates in a supernatural change upon bread or wine, but which was conceived and born of the body of a woman; his human soul is not such as may be 'broken' and 'eaten,' but is cogitative and inedible; and his person as mediator is in a state of exaltation, and remains enthroned in glory, at the right hand of the divine Majesty,—Acts i. 11; Heb. ix. 27, 28, and many other texts.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is incompatible with all the views which the scripture gives of the nature of the eucharist. That ordinance is celebrative, not of a present sacrifice, but of one which was completed in the offering up once for all of the body of Jesus Christ: it is an ordinance of strictly a *commemorative* character. 'This do,' said the Redeemer, when commanding that the bread be eaten, and again when commanding that the cup be drunk,—'This do *in remembrance of me*.' The ordinance, therefore, is not an exhibition of Jesus as present, but a memorial of him as having died, and risen, and 'passed into the heavens.'—Again, the eucharist is a social ordinance. It is not such as may be observed and entire in one person partaking of it, or in each person of a number partaking of it singly or apart from the rest; but such as requires joint participation or fellowship on the part of a church or congregation. 'Wherefore, my brethren,' says the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, 'when ye come together to eat' the Lord's supper, 'tarry one for another,' 1 Cor. xi. 33. Nor does the ordinance admit of an entire bread—be it called 'loaf,' or 'wafer,' or whatever else—being received by each individual; but it requires that one bread or one loaf be participated by a society, or divided amongst them, in token of their fellowship with one another, and of their common union to the Saviour. 'The loaf which we break,' *τον ἄρτον ὃν κλάμεν*, says Paul, 'is it not the communion,' the joint participation, *κοινωνία*, 'of the body of Christ?'

For we, being many, are one loaf, one body, *ἡς ἄρτος, ἐν σῶμα*; for we are all partakers of the one loaf,' *ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἄρτου*, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.—Further, the eucharist, as to the manner in which the bread is used, or as to the form, breaking, and distribution of the bread, resembles a social repast. One phrase, 'the breaking of bread,' is employed in scripture in reference both to it and to a social meal; and 'he brake the bread'—the loaf or the cake, *τον ἄρτον*,—is the scriptural description of the treatment both of the bread in an ordinary repast, and of the bread in the eucharist. Comp. Matt. vii. 6; xii. 4; xiv. 17; xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; 1 Cor. x. 16; Acts ii. 42, 46; Luke xxiv. 35. Now the bread used among the Jews in their common meals, or that which the scriptures designate *ἄρτος*, 'bread,' or 'a loaf,' was a flat cake, such as in English would be termed a biscuit. Hence the force, and even the mere meaning of the phrase, 'the breaking of bread,'—'he brake the bread, and gave it to them.' The *ἄρτος*, or bread, however, cannot thus be understood in consistency either with the idea of transubstantiation, or with that of a bread or *ἄρτος* being given entire, as the Romish wafer needs to be, to one individual.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is opposed also to the leading doctrines of the gospel respecting the ground of a believer's hope, and the spirit in which he acts and worships. He is justified through the blood of Christ, not as supernaturally transubstantiated out of bread, nor as received into his mouth and stomach, but as shed on the cross, or poured out once for all at the beginning of the Christian dispensation,—(Heb. ix. 26, 28; x. 14,) not as reproduced under the appearance of a solid wafer, but as visibly shed, and actually offered in sacrifice by the Saviour himself, the high-priest of his profession, Heb. ix. 22. He is saved, not by an act of his own in corporeally receiving the body and blood of Christ, but by grace, making him a new creature, and enabling him in a spiritual manner to contemplate Christ in God's word and ordinances, Eph. ii. 8—10, and many other texts. He lives, and worships, and approaches God in ordinances, not by tasting, touching, seeing, or otherwise exercising outward sense, but by faith as opposed to sense,—by beholding the Saviour, or enjoying union with him, not in any physical manner, but with his intellect or soul, Isa. lv. 2; John i. 29; xx. 29. All his religious services, even when external symbols are employed, are strictly spiritual. He worships Him who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, serves God in the spirit, and has no confidence in the flesh. The kingdom of God, which is within him, is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, John iv. 4; vi. 63; Col. ii. 20—23; Matt. xv. 11, 17; Mark vii. 18, 19.

Finally, The doctrine of transubstantiation is rendered utterly inadmissible by all those texts on the subject of the eucharist which, referring to the wine, call it metonymically, this cup, or referring to the bread and the wine after what the Romanists term 'consecration,' or after blessing, or giving thanks, call them 'this bread,' 'this fruit of the vine.' See Matt. xxvi. 27, 29; Mark xiv. 25; Luke xxii. 18, 20; xxiv. 35; Acts ii. 42; xx. 7; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17; xi. 25, 27.—ED.]

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.

QUESTION CLXXI. *How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to prepare themselves before they come unto it?*

ANSWER. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves, of their being in Christ, of their sins, and wants, of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong, of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

THE Lord's supper being a sacred and solemn ordinance, it ought not to be engaged in without due preparation in those who partake of it. The duties mentioned in this Answer, which are preparatory for it, are self-examination, the renewing of the exercise of those graces which are necessary to our partaking of it aright, serious meditation on the work in which we are about to be engaged, and fervent prayer for the presence and blessing of God in it.

Self-Examination.

As to the duty of self-examination, we must, in order to perform it, retire from the hurry and encumbrances of the world, that our minds may be disengaged from them, and not filled with distracting thoughts, which will be an hinderance to us in our inquiries into the state of our souls. We must also resolve to deal impartially with ourselves, and consider what really makes against us, as matter of sorrow, shame, and humiliation, as well as those things which are encouraging and occasions of thanksgiving to God. We must also endeavour to be acquainted with the word of God, to which our actions and behaviour are to be applied, and by

which we are to determine the goodness and badness of our state, in general, or the frame of spirit in which we are, in particular. Now, there are several things, concerning which we are to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's supper.

1. We are to examine whether we are in Christ or not; since persons must be first in him before they can have spiritual communion with him. There are some things which, if we find them in ourselves, would give us ground to determine that we are not in Christ. In particular, that man is not in Christ who is an utter stranger to his person, natures, offices, and the design of his coming into the world, together with the spiritual benefits purchased by his death. Neither is he in Christ who never saw his need of him, or that there is no hope of salvation without him. Again, he is not in Christ who obstinately refuses to submit to his government, lives in a wilful contempt of his laws, resolutely persists in the commission of known sins, or in the total neglect of known duties. Again, he is not in Christ who is ashamed of his doctrine, his gospel, his cross, which a true believer counts his glory; as the apostle says, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ.'^e He also must be reckoned out of Christ who is stupid and presumptuous, and who, though he may hope to be saved by him, yet desires not to have communion with him, but expects to be made partaker of his benefits without faith; or whose faith, if he pretends to have any, is only an assent to some truths, without being accompanied with repentance and other graces which are inseparably connected with that faith which is saving.

On the other hand, we may know that we are in Christ, if we can truly say that we have received a new nature from him, whence proceed renewed actions, which discover themselves in the whole course of our lives. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.'^f We must also inquire whether we endeavour constantly to adhere to his revealed will, not merely as the result of some sudden conviction, but as making it the main business of life to approve ourselves to him in well-doing; as our Saviour says, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.'^g Again, converse with Christ in ordinances, is another evidence of our being in him. For, as a man is said to be known by the company he keeps, or delights to be in; so a true Christian is known, as the apostle says, by his 'having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'^h Further, we must inquire whether we have a great concern for his glory and interest in our own souls, and an earnest desire that his name may be known and magnified in the world; and whether this desire be accompanied with using our utmost endeavours in our various stations and capacities in order to the attainment of the end.

2. The next thing which we are to examine ourselves about, before we come to the Lord's supper, is what sense we have of sin, whether we are truly humbled for it, and desirous to be delivered from it. It is not sufficient for us to take a general view of ourselves as sinners, in common with the rest of mankind, without being duly affected with it. We must consider the various aggravations of sin, with a particular application to ourselves; and how much we have exceeded many others in sin, either before or since we were called by the grace of God. By this means we may take occasion to say, as the apostle does concerning himself, that we are 'the chief of sinners';ⁱ and a sense of our guilt, when duly considered, will give us occasion to lie very low at the foot of God. We are also to take notice of our natural propensity and inclination to sin, and the various ways by which this has discovered itself in our actions. Accordingly, we are to inquire whether we have sinned knowingly, wilfully, presumptuously, and obstinately; or whether we have been surprised into sin, or ensnared by some sudden and unforeseen temptation, and have committed it without the full bent of our wills; whether we have striven against it, or have given way to it, and suffered ourselves to be prevailed upon without making resistance. We must also inquire whether we have continued in sin, or unfeignedly repented of it; whether sin sits light or heavy on our consciences; or if our consciences are burdened with it, whether we seek relief against it in that way which

^e Gal. vi. 14.^f 2 Cor. v. 17.^g John viii. 31.^h 1 John i. 3.ⁱ 1 Tim. i. 15.

Christ has prescribed in the gospel. We must also inquire whether there are not some sins which more frequently and easily beset us ; what they are, and whether we are daily watchful against them, and use our utmost endeavours to avoid them. We must also inquire whether we have not frequently relapsed into the same sin which we have resolved against at various times, and in particular, at the Lord's table, and thus have broken our engagements ; and if so, whether we did not rely too much on our own strength, when we made resolutions against sin. We are likewise to inquire whether sin gets ground upon us, so that grace is weakened ; or whether, though we commit it, we find its strength abated, and ourselves enabled, in some measure, to mortify it, though we do not wholly abstain from it ; as the apostle says, ' That which I do, I allow not ; but what I hate, that do I.'^k We are also to inquire whether our sins have not involved a great neglect of Christ, his blood, his grace, his benefits, we not thinking of them, admiring or prizing them above all things, nor laying hold on them by faith, and so not making a right use of his dying love, which is signified in the Lord's supper.

3. We are to examine ourselves, before we come to the Lord's table, as to what particular wants we have to be supplied. Our Saviour is to be considered in this ordinance, not only as signified by the external elements, but as present with his people when met together in his name, with earnest expectation of enjoying communion with him. And as he is appointed to apply redemption to us, as well as purchase it for us, we must consider him as having his hands full of spiritual blessings, to impart to his necessitous people who come to him for them. Hence, they ought, before they go, to inquire not only, as has been already observed, what are their sins to be confessed and bewailed before him, but what it is, more especially, that they stand in need of from him. The question which Christ will ask them when they go there, is, What is thy petition, and what is thy request ? What are those wants which thou desirest a supply of ? Accordingly, we are beforehand to inquire whether, though we have some little hope that we have experienced the grace of God in truth, yet we do not want a full assurance of our interest in Christ, ' that we may know that we have eternal life,'^l together with the joy of faith accompanying its actings ; and whether we do not want enlargement of heart, and raised affections in holy duties, which the psalmist seems to intend, when he says, ' Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.'^m Again, we are to inquire whether we do not want many experiences which we formerly had of the grace of God, and of his special presence in holy duties ; or have not occasion to say with Job, ' Oh that it were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when his candle shined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness !'ⁿ Moreover, we are to inquire whether we do not want a greater degree of establishment in the great doctrines of the gospel, or to be kept steady in a time of temptation ; and whether we do not want a greater degree of zeal for the honour of God, in a day in which many professors are lukewarm, as our Saviour observes concerning the church of Laodicea, that ' they were neither cold nor hot ;'^o or whether we do not want, together with this zeal, a compassion to the souls of others who make shipwreck of faith, not having a good conscience, which may induce us, as the apostle says, ' In meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ;'^p and whether we are duly affected with the degeneracy of the age in which we live, and are not too negligent in bearing our testimony against the errors advanced in it ; or whether we understand the meaning of those various dispensations of providence which we are under, and what is our present duty in compliance with them. These things are of a more general nature, and to be made the subject of our inquiry, whenever we draw nigh to Christ in any ordinance in which we hope for a supply of our wants. But there are other things which we ought to have a more particular regard to in our inquiries, when we are to engage in the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

In order to our partaking of it aright, we are to inquire whether we do not want

^k Rom. vii. 15.
ⁿ Job xxix. 2, 3.

^l 1 John v. 13.
^o Rev. iii. 15.

^m Psal. cxlii. 7.
^p 2 Tim. ii. 25

a clear and distinct apprehension of the covenant of grace, and its seals; how we are to act faith in a way of self-dedication; and how we ought to renew our covenant engagements with God, which we are more especially called to do in this ordinance. We are also to inquire whether we do not want a broken heart, suitably affected with the dying love of Jesus Christ, signified in the ordinance, that we may 'look on him who was pierced, and mourn.'^q We are likewise to inquire whether we do not want to be led into the true way of improving Christ crucified, to answer all those accusations which are brought in against us, either by Satan or our own consciences; and how this is an expedient for taking away the guilt and power of sin. We are further to inquire whether we do not want to be made more like Christ, and conformed to his death, that, while we behold him represented as dying for us, we may 'reckon ourselves as dead to sin,' and to the world, and may reckon also that 'our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.'^r We are also to inquire whether we do not want an abiding impression of the love of Christ, and a greater steadfastness in our resolution to adhere to him; that so, whatever grace we may be enabled to act, by strength derived from him, may be maintained and exercised, not only when we are, but also when we are not, immediately engaged in that ordinance. These things we are to examine ourselves concerning, that we may spread our wants before the Lord at his table.

To induce us to this work of self-examination, we may consider that our corrupt nature is very prone to think ourselves better than we really are; so that, how indigent and distressed soever we may be, we are ready to conclude, with the church of the Laodiceans, that 'we are rich' and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.'^s Moreover, if we are not truly sensible of our necessities, we shall not value Christ's fulness, or the rich provision he has made for his people, and is pleased to dispense in this ordinance; as it is said, 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'^t We must consider also that a great part of our work in observing this ordinance consists in ejaculatory prayer, which we shall not be able to put up in a right manner if we are not sensible of our wants. One reason why we are so often at a loss in prayer, or go out of the presence of God empty, is that our hearts are not enlarged in it. Now, they cannot be enlarged in prayer unless we are affected with a sense of our necessities. We have full encouragement, however, to examine ourselves concerning them, before we partake of the Lord's supper. Christ invites us to draw nigh to him in that ordinance, that he may take occasion to communicate the blessings of his redemption which are signified by it, that he may supply our wants, satisfy our desires, surmount our difficulties, and apply to us the great and precious promises of the covenant of grace. But these are to be sought for at his hands by faith and prayer; which supposes the performance of this duty of self-examination, with respect to the blessings which we stand in need of from him.

4. We are, before we partake of the Lord's supper, to examine ourselves concerning the truth and measure of our knowledge in divine things; inasmuch as without the knowledge of these the heart cannot be good, nor any spiritual duty engaged in in a right manner. A perfect comprehensive knowledge of divine truths, indeed, is not to be expected, by reason of the weakness of our capacities, and the imperfection of the present state; in which, as the apostle says, 'we see' but 'through a glass darkly';^u or, as it is said elsewhere, 'We are but of yesterday, and know,' comparatively, 'nothing.'^x There is, however, a degree of knowledge which is not only attainable, but necessary to our right engaging in this ordinance. This does not consist merely in our knowing that there is a God, or that he is to be worshipped, or that there was such a person as our Saviour, who lived in the world, was crucified, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. For a person may have a general notion of all these things, and yet be unacquainted with the end and design of Christ's death, and the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace which he

q Zech. xii. 10.
t Matt. ix. 12.

r Rom. vi. 6, 10.
u 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

s Rev. iii. 17.
x Job viii. 9.

procured by his death, or with the claim which a person may lay by faith to them. But without being acquainted with these things, there is not a sufficient knowledge, such as the apostle calls 'a discerning the Lord's body,'^y which we ought to have in this ordinance. The knowledge of divine truths which ought to be pressed after, and as to our attainments in which we are to examine ourselves, respects the person of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, and the offices which he executes as such. More particularly, it respects the manner and end of his executing his priestly office, in which he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, which we are more especially to commemorate in this ordinance. We must also have an affecting sense or knowledge of the guilt of sin; and, as a relief against it, must be acquainted with the doctrine of the free grace of God, displayed in the gospel, and founded in the blood of Jesus, whereby sin is pardoned. We are also to be fully convinced of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, whereby alone sin can be subdued, and of the method he takes to make the redemption purchased by Christ effectual to answer that end. Again, we are to endeavour, in some measure, to know God as our Father, and covenant-God in Christ, who bestows on his people the rich and splendid entertainment of his house, and satisfies them with the abundance of his goodness, pursuant to what Christ has purchased. We must also know what it is to deal with him as those who see themselves obliged to devote themselves to him as their God; and what large expectations they may have from him whom he has avouched to be his peculiar people; and how these expectations are a foundation of that humble 'boldness' with which they are encouraged to 'come unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'^z Moreover, we are to inquire, not only whether we have conceptions of the excellency, glory, and suitableness of those great things which are revealed in the gospel, to answer our particular exigencies, and render us happy in the enjoyment of God, but whether the knowledge of them makes a due impression on our hearts, is of a transforming nature, and has a tendency to regulate the conduct of our lives, and put us on the application of these great things to ourselves.

As to the degree of our knowledge, we must inquire whether it be only a simple apprehension that the doctrines of the gospel are true, or at most, contains some general ideas of their being excellent and worthy of the highest esteem. We must also inquire whether we can prove them to be true, and render a reason of our faith. Without this, our knowledge may, indeed, be rightly placed as to its object; but it cannot be said to be deeply rooted, and therefore is exposed to greater danger of being foiled, weakened, or overthrown by temptation. We must also inquire whether we grow in knowledge in proportion to those opportunities or means of grace which we are favoured with. This the apostle calls 'growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'^a

5. We are to examine ourselves concerning the truth and degree of our faith, and other graces which are inseparably connected with it. As for faith, we are to inquire whether it be a living faith, or what the apostle calls a 'dead faith,'^b as being 'alone,' and destitute of those good works which ought to proceed from it; whether it contains only an assent to the truth of divine revelation; or whether it puts us upon closing with Christ, embracing him in all his offices, and trusting in him for all those benefits which he has purchased by his blood. We must also inquire what fruits or effects it produces, and what other graces accompany or flow from it; whether it inclines us to set the highest value on Christ, as being, in our esteem, altogether lovely, and gives us low thoughts of ourselves, as having nothing but what we depend on him for, or derive from him; whether it be attended with some degree of holiness in heart and life, as the apostle speaks of 'the heart being purified by faith';^c whether it be such a faith as 'overcomes the world,'^d and prevents our being easily turned aside from God, by the snares which we meet with; whether we are inclined by it to confess ourselves to be 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth,'^e and to 'desire a better country.'^f There are many other fruits and effects of faith, which the apostle mentions in the eleventh chapter of the

y 1 Cor. xi. 29.
c Acts xv. 9.

z Heb. iv. 16.
d 1 John v. 4.

a 2 Pet. iii. 18.
e Heb. xi. 13.

b James ii. 17, 18.
f Verse 16.

epistle to the Hebrews, by which we may examine ourselves concerning the truth and sincerity of this grace. There are also several graces mentioned in this Answer which are connected with faith, concerning which we must inquire whether they are found in us,—particularly repentance. This must of necessity be exercised in this ordinance as well as faith; inasmuch as by the one, we behold Christ's glory, and by the other, we take a view of sin's deformity. And it is such a repentance as inclines us not only to hate sin, but to forsake and turn from it, as seeing the detestable and odious nature of it, in what Christ endured to make satisfaction for it. But as faith and repentance were particularly considered under a former Answer, together with the nature, properties, and effects of them,^g we shall pass them over, and consider the graces of love to God, desire after Christ, and our using endeavours to approve ourselves his servants and subjects, by constant acts of obedience to him. These things are to be the subject of our inquiry, before we engage in this ordinance.

It is very suitable to the occasion, to inquire whether we love Christ or not; inasmuch as we are to behold and be affected with the most amazing instance of love which he has expressed to us. We ought therefore to inquire whether our love to him be superlative, far exceeding that which we bear to all creatures, how valuable soever they may be to us, how nearly soever we may be related to them, or whatever engagements we may be laid under to esteem and value them. We may also try the sincerity of our love to God, by inquiring whether it puts us on performing the most difficult duties for his sake, with the greatest cheerfulness; and whether we are encouraged by it to bear the most afflictive evils with patience, because it is his pleasure that we should be exercised with them.^h We ought also to inquire whether we love him with all our heart, or whether our love is divided betwixt him and the creature, so that our affections are often drawn aside from him; whether our love to him puts us upon improving our time, strength, and all our other talents to his glory; whether we have no interest separate from his, which we cannot but prefer to our chief joy; whether his glory be the very end of our living, as the apostle says, 'For me to live is Christ;'ⁱ whether we are earnestly desirous to bring others to him, not only by recommending his glory to them in words, but by expressing the esteem and value we have for him, in the whole course of our conversation; whether we are inclined by our love to him to hate every thing which he hates, as the psalmist says, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;'^k and whether we make those things the object of our choice which he delights in. Moreover, we are to inquire whether we have had any communion with him in ordinances, and particularly in this ordinance, at other times. And when he is pleased to withhold this privilege from us in any degree, in order that we may see that all our comforts flow from him, or that he may humble us for those sins which provoke him to depart from us, we are to inquire whether we are earnestly desirous of his return, and cannot be satisfied with any thing short of him.

As for our desires after Christ, which we are farther to examine ourselves about, we must inquire whether that which moves or inclines us to desire him, be the view we have of the glory of his Person, and the delight which arises from our contemplating his divine excellencies; or whether we desire him only for the sake of his benefits, or only that he might deliver us from the wrath to come; whether we desire Christ only when his service is attended with the esteem of men, or as a means to gain some worldly advantage from them; or whether we desire to adhere to him, when we are called to suffer reproach or even the loss of all things for his sake,—which will be a convincing evidence of the sincerity of our desires after him, and, consequently, of our love to him. We are farther to inquire whether our love to Christ, and desire after him, discovers itself by renewed acts of obedience to him; particularly, whether our obedience be universal or partial, constant or wavering, performed with delight and pleasure, or with some reluctance; and whether it puts us upon universal holiness, we being induced to practise it from the in-

^g See Sect. 'The Objects and Acts of Saving Faith,' and following sections, under Quest. lxxii, lxxiii. See also Quest. lxxvi, lxxxv—lxxxvii.

^h 1 Sam. iii. 18.

ⁱ Phil. i. 21.

^k Psal. xcvi. 10.

fluence of gospel-motives. Thus concerning our examining ourselves about our faith, repentance, love to Christ, desire after him, and our endeavour to yield obedience to him in all things.

The next thing we are to examine ourselves concerning, is whether we have such a love to the brethren, and charity to all men, as disposes us to exercise forgiveness to those who have done us any injuries. The Lord's supper being an ordinance of mutual fellowship, we are obliged to behave ourselves toward one another as members of the same body, subjects of the same Lord, engaged in the same religious exercise; and, consequently, are obliged so to love one another that it may appear that we are Christ's disciples.¹ This love consists in our desiring and endeavouring to promote the spiritual interest of one another, in order that Christ may be glorified; and it includes that charity which casts a vail over others' failures and defects, and our forgiving those injuries which they have at any time done to us. This frame of spirit is certainly becoming the nature of the ordinance; in which we hope to be made partakers of the fruits and effects of Christ's love, and to obtain forgiveness from him of all the injuries we have done against him. It is therefore very necessary for us to inquire, concerning our love to the brethren, whether it be such as is a distinguishing character of those who are Christ's friends and followers, or such, according to the apostle's expression, as will afford an evidence to us that we have 'passed from death unto life.'^m In order to our discovering this, let us examine ourselves whether we love the brethren because we behold the image of God in them, which is, in effect, to love and 'glorify God in them;'ⁿ and whether our love to men leads us to desire and endeavour to be a common good to all, according to the utmost of our ability. Thus it is said of Mordecai, that 'he was accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.'^o Again, we are to inquire whether our love be more especially to the souls of men, as well as their outward concerns. This consists in our using all suitable endeavours to bring them under conviction of sin, by faithful and well-timed reproofs; for the contrary to this, or our refusing to rebuke our neighbour or brother, and so 'suffering sin upon him,' is reckoned no other than a 'hating' of him.^p We are also to express our love to the souls of men, by endeavouring to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are in an unconverted state, or to walk as becomes his gospel, if they have been made partakers of its grace. Thus the apostle expresses his love to those to whom he writes, when he says, 'I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you;'^q and elsewhere, he signifies to another of the churches, how 'affectionately desirous he was of them;' so that he was 'willing, not only to impart the gospel of God, but his own soul; because they were dear unto him.'^r Again, we must inquire whether our love puts us upon choosing those to be our associates who truly fear the Lord, whom we count as the psalmist expresses it, 'the excellent, in whom is all our delight;'^s and, on the other hand, whether we avoid the society of, or intimacy with, those who are Christ's open enemies. Thus the prophet reproves good Jehoshaphat for associating with improper persons, when he says, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?'^t Again, we ought to inquire whether our love to men is then expressed when it is most needed; as it is said, 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.'^u We are to inquire also whether we are inclined to all the acts of that charity which covers a multitude of faults; as the apostle describes it, that it 'suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.'^x

Again, we are to inquire whether our love to men be expressed in forgiving injuries. This is a frame of spirit absolutely necessary for our engaging in any ordinance. Accordingly, our Saviour says, 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,'^y that is, if there be

1 John xiii. 35.

p Lev. xix. 17.

t 2 Chron. xix. 2.

m 1 John iii. 14.

q Gal. iv. 19.

u Prov. xvii. 17.

n Gal. i. 24.

r 1 Thess. ii. 8.

x 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8.

o Esth. x. 3.

s Psal. xvi. 3.

y Matt. v. 23, 24

a misunderstanding between you, whoever be the aggressor, or gave the first occasion for it, 'leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother,' that is, do whatever is in thy power in order to effect a reconciliation, and 'then come and offer thy gift.' Such an exercise of a forgiving spirit is especially necessary when we engage in this ordinance; in which we hope to obtain forgiveness of the many offences which we have committed against God. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'^z It is no difficult matter for us to know whether we are disposed to forgive those who have injured us. Hence, the principal thing we are to examine ourselves about, is, whether we exercise forgiveness in a right frame of spirit, considering how prone we are to do things ourselves which may render it necessary for us to be forgiven, both by God and man; and whether, as the consequence of forgiving others, though we were formerly inclined to overlook those graces which are discernible in them, we now can love them as brethren, and glorify God for what they have experienced, and be earnestly solicitous for their salvation as well as our own. Thus concerning the first duty mentioned in this Answer, namely, our examining ourselves before we engage in this ordinance.

Various Duties of Preparation for the Lord's Supper.

We now proceed to consider some other duties mentioned in this Answer. One of these is the renewing of the exercise of those graces which are necessary to our right engaging in it, so that the sincerity and truth of them may be discerned. As faith, repentance, and several other graces ought to be exercised in this ordinance, it is necessary for us to give a specimen of them before we engage in it. As the artificer tries the instrument he is to make use of in some curious work before he uses it, so the truth and sincerity of our faith are to be tried before it be exercised in this ordinance.

Another duty preparatory to the Lord's supper, mentioned in this Answer, is serious meditation. We are to perform this duty that we may not engage in the ordinance without considering the greatness of the Majesty with whom we have to do, together with our own vileness and unworthiness to approach his presence. We must also consider his power, wisdom, and goodness, to encourage us to hope for those supplies of grace from him which we stand in need of; and we are to have an awful sense of his omnipresence and omniscience, as he is an heart-searching God, that we may be excited to an holy reverence, and guarded against the wandering of our thoughts and affections from him, or any unbecoming behaviour in his presence. More particularly, we are to consider beforehand, the end and design of Christ's instituting this ordinance,—namely, that his dying love to sinners might be signified and showed forth, as an encouragement to our faith, and an inducement to thanksgiving and praise.

It is farther observed that we are to endeavour to prepare for this ordinance by fervent prayer, being sensible that, when we have done our best, we shall be too much unprepared for it, unless we have the special assistance of God when engaging in it. To this case may be applied the words of Hezekiah, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers; though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.'^a We are to be earnest with God that he would give us a believing view of Christ crucified, and especially of our interest in him, that we may be able to say as the apostle does, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me;'^b and that he would apply to us those blessings which he has purchased by his death, which we desire to wait upon him for when engaging in this ordinance, that our drawing nigh to him in it may redound to his glory and our spiritual advantage.

^z 1 Cor. v. 8.

^a 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19.

^b Gal. ii. 20.

THE PARTAKERS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

QUESTION CLXXII. *May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper?*

ANSWER. One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account, hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity, in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians, he is to bewail his unbelief; and labour to have his doubts resolved, and so doing, he may, and ought to come to the Lord's supper that he may be farther strengthened.

QUESTION CLXXIII. *May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, be kept from it?*

ANSWER. Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may, and ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

In these Answers we have an account of those who ought to partake of the Lord's supper, and of those who must be kept from it. The former Answer respects, more especially, doubting Christians, who desire to receive satisfaction, whether they ought to engage in the ordinance or not; the latter respects persons who are ready to presume that they are qualified for it, and ought to partake of it, though they are such as are to be excluded from it.

The Case of Doubting Professors.

As to the case of one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and duly prepared for the Lord's supper, there are several things which may afford matter of encouragement to him.

1. Though his being duly prepared for the Lord's supper is a matter of doubt to him, he being destitute of assurance of his being in Christ; yet he may be mistaken in the judgment which he passes concerning himself. Assurance, as was formerly observed, is not of the essence of saving faith;^c for a person may rely on Christ, or give himself up to him, by a direct act of faith, who cannot, at the same time, take the comfort that would otherwise arise from thence, that Christ has loved him and given himself for him. Many have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the great resistance and disturbance which they meet with from the corruption of nature. Others, too, who at present have assurance of their interest in Christ, may afterwards, through divine desertion, lose the comfortable sense of it. Hence, we must not conclude that every doubting believer is destitute of faith. Those are to be tenderly dealt with, and not discouraged from attending on the Lord's supper, whom others who converse with them cannot but think to have a right to it, and to be habitually prepared for it; though they themselves very much question whether they are actually meet for it, being apprehensive that they cannot exercise those graces which are necessary to their partaking of the ordinance in a right manner.

Let it be considered, then, that there are some things, which, if duly considered by a weak, doubting Christian, would afford him ground of hope; though, it may be, he cannot sufficiently improve them to his own comfort. Thus, if he be truly affected with his want of assurance, and, in consequence, is filled with uneasiness in his own mind, laments his condition, and can take no comfort in any outward enjoyments, while destitute of it; if he is importunate with God in prayer, that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and grant him the exercise as well as the joy of faith; if he frequently examines himself with impartiality, and with an earnest desire to be satisfied as to his state, yet still walks in darkness, and

^c See Quest. lxxxi.

his doubts and fears prevail against him ; he has some ground to conclude that he is better than he apprehends himself to be, provided he is truly humbled for those sins which may be reckoned the procuring cause of his doubts and fears, and determines to be still waiting till God shall be pleased to discover to him his interest in forgiving grace, and thereby resolve his doubts and expel his fears, which render him so very uneasy. Moreover, a person has some ground of hope, if he can say that he unfeignedly desires Christ and grace above all things, and can find satisfaction in nothing short of him ; for in this case, it may be said that Christ is precious to him, as he is to those who believe. We may add, that he has some ground of hope, if he desires to forsake all sin, as being offensive and contrary to him, so that when he commits it, he can truly say with the apostle, ' That which I do, I allow not ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate that do I ; ' and hence concludes himself ' wretched,' and earnestly desires to be ' delivered from the body of this death.'^d

Again, there are some promises which a weak doubting Christian may lay hold on for his encouragement. If the guilt of sin lies as a heavy burden upon him, and is the occasion of his doubts about his being in Christ ; there are promises of forgiveness.^e If he complains of the power of sin, and its prevalency over him ; there is a promise which is suited to his case : ' Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.'^f If Satan's temptations are very grievous to him, and such as he can hardly resist ; there are promises suited to his case, that ' God will not suffer' his people ' to be tempted above that they are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape ;'^g and, ' The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'^h If he wants enlargement and raised affections in prayer or other religious duties, so that he is very greatly discouraged, these promises may afford him some relief : ' I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications ;'ⁱ and ' Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; thou wilt prepare their heart ; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.'^k If our doubts arise from frequent backslidings, and relapses into sin, we may apply these promises : ' He restoreth my soul,'^l &c. ; and ' I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely ; for mine anger is turned away from them.'^m We may also, in this case, apply to him Isa. lvii. 17, 18, where it is supposed that God was wroth, and hid himself from his people for their iniquity ; and where, though they are described as ' going on frowardly in the way of their heart,' yet God says, ' I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.' We may likewise apply Hos. xi. 7—9, where, though God's people are described as bent to backslide from him, yet he determines not to destroy them, but says, in a very moving way, ' How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel, &c. Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim ; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.' Again, if we want communion with God, or his presence with us in his ordinances, and are hence led to conclude that we are not in Christ ; let us consider these texts : ' I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain ;'ⁿ and, ' For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.'^o If we are under frequent convictions which soon wear off, and are led to fear, from their want of permanency, that we never experienced a thorough work of conversion ; let us consider the following texts : ' Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord ?'^p ' Who hath despised the day of small things ?'^q ' As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it ; so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all.'^r If we are in a withering and declining condition, and want reviving ;

d Rom. vii. 15, 24.

h Rom. xvi. 20.

m Hos. xiv. 4.

q Zech. iv. 10.

e Mic. vii. 18, 19 ; Isa. lv. 7, 8.

i Zech. xii. 10.

n Isa. xlv. 19.

r Isa. lxv. 8.

f Rom. vi. 14.

k Psal. x. 17.

o Chap. liv. 7, 8.

g 1 Cor. x. 13.

l Psal. xxiii. 3.

p Chap. lxvi. 9.

or, if we complain of barrenness under the means of grace, so that we attend upon them, as we apprehend, to very little purpose; there are some promises suited to our case, as Hos. xiv. 7, 8; Isa. xlviii. 17. If our doubts arise from the hardness of our hearts, so that we cannot mourn for sin as we ought to do, or would do, let us consider what God has promised in Ezek. vii. 16; Deut. xxx. 6; Acts v. 31. If we are under the visible tokens of God's displeasure, so that we are ready to conclude that he distributes terrors to us in his anger; and if, in consequence, we walk in darkness, and are far from peace; there are many promises suited to our case, as Jer. iii. 5; Psal. ciii. 8—10; Isa. xii. 1; Joel ii. 13; Isa. l. 10; Psal. lxxix. 15; and xlii. 11.

2. We have a farther account how those who are, at present, discouraged from coming to the Lord's table ought to manage themselves. It is observed that they ought to bewail their unbelief, to labour to have their doubts resolved; and that, instead of being discouraged, they should come to the Lord's supper to be farther strengthened. This advice is not given to stupid sinners, or such as are unconcerned about their state, or never had the least ground to conclude that they have had communion with God in any ordinance,—especially if their distress of conscience arises rather from a slavish fear of the wrath of God, than from a filial fear of him, or if they are more concerned about the dreadful consequences of sin, than about the intrinsic evil of it; I say, this advice is not given to such. But it is given to those, who, as formerly described, lament after the Lord; earnestly seek him, though they cannot, at present, find him; and have fervent desires for his presence, though no sensible enjoyment of it; and appear to have some small degrees of grace, though it be very weak. In this case a few words of advice ought to be given to them. In particular, they should take heed of giving way to any hard thoughts of God; but should, on the other hand, lay the whole blame of their state on themselves. Thus God says by the prophet, 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?'^s They should also give glory to, depend on, and seek relief from the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who glorifies himself by sealing believers till the day of redemption, and bestows those comforts on them which they stand in need of. They must likewise endeavour, to their utmost, to act grace, and so go forward in the ways of God, though they do not go on comfortably; and must not say, 'Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' Are they sometimes afraid that they shall not arrive safely at the end of their race? They should nevertheless resolve not to give up or to run no longer in it. And because their way is attended with darkness, or hedged up with thorns, they should not determine, for that reason, to go backward, as though they had never set their faces heavenward. Again, they ought to lie at God's foot, acknowledging their unworthiness of that peace which they desire but are destitute of; and should plead for his special presence, which would give an happy turn to the frame of their spirits, as that which they prefer to all the enjoyments of life; as the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'^t Further, it would be advisable for them to contract an intimacy and frequently converse with experienced Christians, who know the depths of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and the methods of divine grace in restoring comforts to those who are, at present, destitute of them, agreeably to what they themselves have experienced in a similar case.^u Finally, they ought, for the strengthening of their faith, and the establishing of their comforts, to wait on God in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, hoping for Christ's presence in it. Many have found, in observing it, that they have been enlivened, quickened, and comforted; while others, through the neglect of it, have had their doubts and fears increased.

The Case of Ignorant and Immoral Professors.

We are now led to consider what is contained in the latter of the Answers we

^s Jer. ii. 17.

11.

^t Psal. iv. 6.

3 Y

^u 2 Cor. i. 4.

are explaining. This relates to those who desire to come to the Lord's supper, but are to be kept from it. Here it is taken for granted that all are not to be admitted to this ordinance; though, it may be, they make a general profession of the Christian faith, and are not willing that any should question their right to it. These are described in this Answer as being ignorant of the great doctrines of the gospel, and consequently unacquainted with Christ, whom they never truly applied themselves to, nor received by faith. Hence, they cannot improve this ordinance aright, or have communion with Christ in it.—Again, those are to be excluded from the Lord's supper, who are scandalous or immoral in their practice, whatever pretensions they make to the character of Christians. These are described by the apostle as persons who 'profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.'^x Such ought not to have communion with those whom the apostle describes as 'called to be saints.'^y Nor can they partake of this ordinance aright; for they are not apprized of the end and design of it, and they are not able, as the apostle expresses it, to 'discern the Lord's body.'^z If they are strangers to themselves, how can they apply the benefits of Christ's redemption to their own case? If they neglect the preparatory duty of self-examination, so that they do not know their own wants, how can they go to Christ in this ordinance for a supply of them? If they do not desire the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace, what right can they have to make use of its seals? If they are openly and visibly of another family, under the dominion of the powers of darkness, what right have they to the privileges which Christ has purchased for those who are members of his family and spiritually united to him?

To what has been said concerning those who are to be excluded from this ordinance, it is objected that it appears that both good and bad have a right to it, from what our Saviour says in the parable of the wheat and the tares,^a both of which are said to 'grow together until the harvest,' when the 'reapers' will be sent to 'gather first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, and the wheat into the barn.' Hence, say the objectors, hypocrites and sincere Christians are to continue together in the same church, and consequently to partake of the same ordinances. But the interpretation assumed in the objection is not the sense of the parable. Our Saviour explains it otherwise, when he says, 'The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.'^b We may hence infer that good and bad men are, through the forbearance of God, suffered to live together in the world; but the passage gives no countenance to the supposition that the wicked ought to be joined with the godly as members of the same church. Not that hypocrites may, and often do, intrude themselves into the churches of Christ; yet as their doing so is not known to the churches, they are not to blame for it, the heart of man being known to God alone. The judgment which we are to pass concerning those who are admitted into church-fellowship, or to the Lord's supper in particular, is to be founded on their credible profession; and though, in making that profession, it is possible for them to deceive others, yet the guilt and ill consequence of their doing so will affect only themselves.

It is farther objected, that Judas was at the Lord's supper when it was instituted by our Saviour, though he knew that he was an hypocrite and a traitor, and that he would speedily execute what he had designed against his life. It is hence inferred that all ought to be admitted to this ordinance. The reason generally assigned for believing that Judas was present at the institution of the ordinance is, that it is said, 'When the hour was come, he sat down, and his twelve apostles with him.'^c We likewise read afterwards that 'he took bread and brake it, &c. and also the cup after supper,'^d &c.; and then it is said, 'Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.'^e This is supposed, by the objectors, to have been spoken by Christ when they were eating the Lord's supper; and they hence conclude that Judas was there. We reply, however, that it seems much more pro-

^x Tit. i. 16.
^b Ver. 38.

^y Rom. i. 7.
^c Luke xxii. 14.

^z 1 Cor. xi. 27.
^d Ver. 19.

^a Matt. xiii. 29.
^e Ver. 21.

bable that he was not present when the Lord's supper was administered, though he joined with Christ and the other apostles in eating the passover. The passover and the Lord's supper were celebrated, the one immediately after the other, at the same table, or sitting; so that the hand of Judas might be with Christ on the table, in the former, though not in the latter. Hence, though these words, 'the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table,' are inserted after the account of both these ordinances being concluded; yet we have ground to suppose that they were spoken while they were eating the passover, when Judas was present. Moreover, it appears yet more probable that he was not present at the Lord's supper, from the account which John gives of the matter. According to that account, our Saviour tells the disciples that 'one of them should betray him;' ^f and he then ^g discovers that he meant Judas, by giving him the sop; and it is said, that 'having received the sop, he went immediately out.' ^h Now it is certain there was no sop in the Lord's supper, as there was in the passover, inasmuch as there was no flesh used in it. Hence, Judas went out when they were eating the passover, before they began to partake of the Lord's supper; being, as we may reasonably suppose, in a rage that his hypocrisy should be detected, and that he should be marked out as a traitor, who was previously reckoned as good a man as any of them. We have not sufficient ground, therefore, to conclude, from the case of Judas, that wicked men ought to be admitted to partake of the Lord's supper.

It is farther objected, that for Christians to exclude any from the Lord's supper, would argue a great deal of pride, or vain-glorious boasting, and would be, as it were, to say to those who are excluded, Stand off, for we are holier than you. But a believer may, with thankfulness, acknowledge the distinguishing grace of God vouchsafed to him and not to others, and also bless him that he has given him a right to the privileges of his house which all are not admitted to partake of; without being guilty of any boasting. He may say with the apostle, 'By the grace of God, I am what I am;' ⁱ and yet deal faithfully with those who are destitute of this grace. He may bless God for the right which he hopes he has to the ordinance of the Lord's supper; and yet not think it his duty to admit those to it who have no right. Again, it is one thing not to admit persons who are unqualified to this ordinance, and another thing to despise them on this account. Our business is, not to reproach them, but to treat them with meekness; if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that so they may appear to have a right to it.

It is farther objected, that if wicked men are to be excluded from one ordinance which Christ has instituted in his church, they may, for the same reason, be excluded from all, and so may as well be debarred the privilege of hearing the word, and joining with the church in public prayer. We reply, that there is not the same reason for excluding wicked men from hearing the word, or joining in prayer with the church, as there is for refusing to admit them to partake of the Lord's supper. Prayer and preaching the word, are God's appointed means for working the grace of faith, instructing the ignorant, awakening the stupid and secure sinner, and putting him on complying with that method of salvation which God has prescribed in the gospel, and embracing Christ as offered in it. On the other hand, the Lord's supper is an ordinance which supposes the soul to have previously received Christ by faith. The communicant is to feed upon Christ, and to take comfort from what he has done and suffered for him, as conducive to the farther mortification of indwelling sin; and this supposes that he has previously had some experience of the grace of God in truth. Thus concerning the exclusion from the Lord's supper of ignorant or immoral persons, on account of their not being qualified.

Here we may farther observe, that they who bring these and similar objections, with a design to open the door of the church so wide that all may be received into it, and partake of those ordinances by which it is more particularly distinguished from the world, are very ready, in defence of their own cause, to charge others with being too severe in their censures, and refusing to admit any into church communion who cannot tell the very time in which they were converted, and the means

by which this work was begun and carried on. They allege, too, that candidates for admission are obliged to profess their faith in so public a manner, that many are denied the privilege of partaking of this ordinance, for a mere circumstance; and they say that this severe course is an extreme as much to be avoided, as the receiving of unqualified persons to the Lord's supper. But as this charge is rather the result of surmise than founded on sufficient evidence, it deserves to have less notice taken of it. Yet I would say in answer to it, that I never observed it to be the practice of any church of Christ to exclude persons from its communion because they knew not the time or means of their conversion. The conversion of persons may sometimes be occasioned by their having been favoured with the blessing of a religious education and restraining grace from their childhood, so that they have not run those lengths in sin which others have done; and, hence the change which is wrought in conversion, especially as to the time and manner of it, is less discernible. Sometimes the work is begun with a less degree of the terrors of conscience, under a sense of the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law, than others have experienced. Persons in whom it has thus commenced have been drawn with the cords of love; and the grace of God has descended upon them insensibly, like the dew upon the grass; so that all that can be perceived by them, or that is to be required of them as a necessary qualification for their being admitted to the ordinances and privileges which belong to believers, is their discovering those fruits of faith which are discernible in the conversation of such as have experienced the grace of God in truth.—As to the other part of the charge, which pretends that some churches insist on such terms of communion as are merely circumstantial, so as to refuse to receive any who cannot comply with them; it is to be answered by those who appear to be liable to it. All that I shall add under this Head, is, that as a visible profession of faith in Christ is to be made, as necessary to constitute a visible church, and the conversation of those who make it ought to be apparently agreeable to it; and as none are obliged to make known to the church anything which involves the least appearance of dishonour or reflection on their character in the world, but are required only to testify and give a proof of their steady adherence to Christ, and their desire to embrace him in all his offices, as well as worship him in all his ordinances; the requiring of a profession of faith from them cannot justly be reckoned an unnecessary circumstance, or making that a term of communion which Christ has not made, and so excluding those who have a right to the Lord's supper.

The Use of the Lord's Supper as a Civil Test.

We have now considered the terms of communion, and the qualifications for it, as well as the spiritual privileges which are to be expected by those who have a right to it. Here, I cannot but observe how these are abused, and practically disowned, by those who engage in this ordinance merely as a qualification for a civil employment. A person may certainly be a good member of a commonwealth and very fit to be intrusted with the administration of its civil affairs, who has little or nothing to say concerning his experience of the grace of God. To assert that a right to a civil employment is founded on the same qualifications which give a person a right to partake of the Lord's supper, would be to advance, not only what is indefensible, but what would be almost universally denied, unless it could be proved that all might partake of the ordinance, the contrary to which we have endeavoured to maintain. Moreover, when Christ instituted this ordinance, his people were in no expectation of bearing any part in the civil government; so that its being used as a test of qualification for such a situation, was most remote from its first intent and design. We often find, too, that the use of it as a civil test is a temptation to men to profane it, and lays a burden on the consciences of those who know themselves unprepared for it, who had little or nothing in view but the securing of their secular interest. It is hence to be feared that many of them eat and drink unworthily, and, instead of receiving advantage by it, bring their consciences under such entanglements as they cannot easily extricate themselves from. Thus concerning those who are to be admitted to be partakers of the Lord's supper, though

doubting of their meetness for it ; and concerning others being excluded, who have no right to it.

The last thing observed in this Answer, is that they who are not, at present, deemed fit for this ordinance, may afterwards be admitted to it, when they have received instruction, and manifested a thorough reformation. If, by their diligent attendance on other ordinances or means of grace, accompanied with the divine blessing, that which at present disqualifies them is removed, they may humbly and thankfully wait on God in this ordinance and hope for his presence and blessing ; and then the church will have reason as well as themselves, to bless God for that grace which they have experienced, whereby they may come to the ordinance for the better and not for the worse.

DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

QUESTION CLXXIV. *What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the time of the administration of it ?*

ANSWER. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, that during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces, in judging themselves and sorrowing for sin, in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fulness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace, in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

QUESTION CLXXV. *What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper ?*

ANSWER. The duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is, seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success ; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance ; but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at the sacrament ; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time ; but if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterward with more care and diligence.

THESE two Answers respect our behaviour in and after our engaging in this ordinance.

Duties while observing the Lord's Supper.

We are to consider with what frame of spirit we are to engage in the ordinance, how our meditations are to be employed, and what graces are to be exercised. Here is something observed which is common to it with all other ordinances, namely, that we are to wait on God with an holy reverence arising from a becoming sense of his divine perfections, and the infinite distance we stand at from him ; and we are to impress on our souls an awful sense of his omniscience and omnipresence. For he knows better than we do ourselves, with what frame of spirit we draw nigh to him ; and highly resents every thing which is contrary to his holiness, or unbecoming the character of those who are worshipping at his footstool. But there are other things peculiar to this ordinance, which are necessary in order to our engaging in it in a right manner.

1. We are diligently to observe the sacramental elements and actions, which contain the external part of the duty required of us. The bread and wine, together with the actions to be performed in our receiving them by Christ's appointment, are, as was formerly observed, significant and instructive signs of his death, and of the benefits which he has procured for us by it ; and these are to be attended to, and brought to our remembrance in this ordinance. Moreover, we are to consider that, while the blessings of the covenant of grace are signified by the sacramental elements and actions, as instituted, not as natural signs, the gospel in which we

have an account of what Christ did and suffered for us, is a large and sufficient explanation for the direction of our faith, when conversant about them.

2. We are affectionately to meditate on the sufferings and death of Christ, which are signified in the ordinance. Meditation is a great part of the work we are to be engaged in; and the death of Christ is the principal subject of it. Accordingly, we are to consider his condescending love in giving his life a ransom for us: and, in order to our being affected with this, and excited to admiration and thankfulness for it, we must contemplate the divine excellency and glory of his Person, which adds an infinite value to every part of his obedience and sufferings. We must consider also the kind of death he died; which is called his being 'wounded,' 'bruised,'^k 'cut off,'^l and is represented as having had the external mark of the curse of God annexed to it, so that he is said to have been made a curse for us.^m We are to consider also the character of the persons for whom he laid down his life; who are described as being 'without strength' or ability to do what is good, and 'ungodly,' and so open enemies to him;ⁿ so that there was nothing in us which could induce him to suffer and die for us. We are to consider also that he died in our room and stead, 'bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows,'^o and being 'delivered for our offences.'^p We are to consider likewise the great ends designed; that God is glorified, and his holiness and justice in demanding and receiving a full satisfaction for sin, illustrated in the highest degree; so that he declares himself 'well-pleased' in what Christ has done and suffered,^q and 'well-pleased' likewise, as the prophet expresses it, 'for his righteousness' sake.'^r We are to consider also the great advantage which we hope to receive; that 'being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.'^s This is the highest inducement to us, to give ourselves entirely up to him.

3. We are, in this ordinance, to stir ourselves up to a vigorous exercise of those graces which the nature of the ordinance requires. Accordingly, we are to judge ourselves; as the apostle says, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.'^t This we ought to do, by accusing, condemning, and passing sentence against ourselves, for those sins which we have committed against Christ, whereby we were plunged into the utmost depths of misery, in which we should for ever have continued, had he not redeemed us by his blood. We are also to acknowledge our desert of God's wrath and curse; so that 'if he should mark iniquities, we could not stand.'^u Our sense of sin ought to be particular, including a view of those transgressions which are known to none but God and ourselves; and we ought to make a particular application of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of them. To act thus is certainly very suitable to the nature of the ordinance, Christ being there set forth as a sacrifice for sin. And we are led, at the same time, to be duly affected with our malady, and the great remedy God has provided; and in consequence are incited to increased praise and thankfulness to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Again, we are to exercise a godly sorrow for sin, which is the ground of all that distress and misery to which we are liable. We are first to bewail our corruption of nature, whence all actual sins proceed; and we are next to bewail our sins of omission, as well as commission,—our neglect to perform duties which are incumbent on us, as well as those sins which have been committed by us with the greatest presumption, deliberation, wilfulness, and obstinacy, and which contain the highest ingratitude and contempt of the blood of Christ, and the method of salvation by him. Our sorrow for sin ought also to produce the good effects of praying and striving against it, and of endeavouring to return to God from whom we have backslidden. The apostle calls it 'sorrowing after a godly sort;' and speaks of it as attended with 'carefulness,' that we may avoid it for the future,— 'clearing of ourselves,' that we may either be encouraged to hope that we have not committed the sins which we are ready to charge ourselves with, or that the guilt of them is taken away by the atonement which Christ has made for us. It ought also to produce an holy 'indignation,' and a kind of 'revenge' against sin, as that

k Isa. liii. 5.
o Isa. liii. 4.
s Rom. v. 9.

l Dan. ix. 26.
p Rom. iv. 25.
t 1 Cor. xi. 31.

m Gal. iii. 13.
q Matt. iii. 17.
u Psal. cxxx. 3.

n Rom. v. 6, 8, 10.
r Isa. xlii. 21.

which has been so prejudicial to us ; likewise a 'fear' of offending, a 'zeal' for the glory of God, whom we have dishonoured, and 'a vehement desire' of those blessings which we have forfeited. It ought to proceed from an inward loathing and abhorrence of sin ; and the degree of it ought to bear some proportion to the respective aggravations of sin, and the dishonour we have brought to God by it ; for if we thus view sin, we shall be effectually inclined to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. To feel in this way is very agreeable to the nature of the ordinance we are engaged in, since nothing tends more to enhance the vile and heinous nature of sin, than the consideration of its having crucified the Lord of glory. The fact, too, of Christ having died on account of sin, is to be the immediate subject of our meditation in observing the ordinance. We read that Christ, in his last sufferings, was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'^x Now, this extreme sorrow could not proceed from the afflictive view which he had of the pains and indignities he was to suffer in his crucifixion ; for to suppose that it did, would argue him to have had a less degree of holy courage and resolution than some of the martyrs have expressed when they have endured extreme torments and most ignominious reproaches for his sake. Hence, his sorrow proceeded from the afflictive sense which he had of the guilt of our sins which he bore. Now, if he not only suffered, but his soul was exceedingly sorrowful for our sins, we ought to be excited to the exercise of godly sorrow for sin, in this ordinance, in which Christ's suffering for it is brought to our remembrance.

3. We are to hunger and thirst after Christ ; and so to have an ardent desire of enjoying communion with him. Thus the church says, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit will I seek thee early ;'^y and the psalmist compares a believer cherishing this desire to the hunted 'hart,' ready to die for thirst, which 'pants after the water-brooks.'^z This desire arises from a deep sense of our need of Christ, and of farther supplies of grace from him ; and is attended with a firm resolution that nothing short of him shall satisfy us, as not being adapted to supply our wants. Such a frame of spirit is agreeable to the ordinance we are engaged in ; since Christ is there represented as having purchased and being ready to apply to his people, those blessings which are of a satisfying and comforting nature.

4. We are to feed on Christ by faith, and so receive of his fulness ; as he is frequently represented in scripture, under the metaphor of 'food.' Thus he styles himself, 'the bread of life ;'^a the blessings he bestows are called, 'the meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life ;'^b and the gospel dispensation is set forth under the metaphor of 'a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.'^c Under the same metaphor, our Saviour represents that dispensation in the parable,^d in which he commands his servants to invite those who were bidden to the marriage feast, by telling them, as an encouragement to their faith, what things he had prepared for their entertainment. Thus, when drawing nigh to Christ in this ordinance, we are to consider that fulness of grace which is in him, of merit for our justification, of strength to enable us to mortify sin and resist temptations, of wisdom to direct us in all emergencies and difficulties, of peace and comfort to revive and encourage us under all our doubts and fears, and to give us suitable relief when we are ready to faint under the burdens we complain of. All these blessings are to be apprehended and applied by faith ; otherwise we cannot conclude that they belong to us. Nor can anything be more adapted to this ordinance than this apprehending and applying of these blessings ; for Christ is there represented as having all those blessings to bestow which he has purchased by his blood, and there also they are signified or showed forth.

5. We are, in this ordinance, to trust in the merits of Christ, or to exercise an entire confidence in him ; who, by his death, has purchased for us all spiritual and saving blessings. This ought to be attended with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, as being 'less than the least of all God's mercies,'^e and as deserving

^x Matt. xxvi. 38.
^b John vi. 27.

^y Isa. xxvi. 9.
^c Isa. xxv. 6

^z Psal. xlii. 1.
^d Matt. xxii. 4.

^a John vi. 35.
^e Gen. xxxii. 10.

nothing but his fierce wrath for our iniquities. And, as Christ has paid a full and satisfactory price of redemption for us, and so procured the blessings which we had forfeited, and which have a tendency to make us completely happy, we ought to lay the whole stress of our salvation on him, being sensible that 'he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.'^f

6. We are to rejoice in Christ's love ; which is infinitely greater than what can be in the heart of one creature towards another. This love of Christ has several properties. It consists, not merely in his desiring our good or wishing that we were happy, but in making us so ; nor does it consist only in his sympathizing with us in our miseries, but also in his delivering us from them, and discovering himself as our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.—Again, as Christ's love to his people did not take its motive at first from any beauty or excellency which he found in them, who were deformed, polluted, and worthy to be abhorred by him, but afterwards were adorned and 'made comely through his comeliness put upon them ;'^g so, when they forfeit his love by their frequent backslidings, and deserve to be cast off by him, it is nevertheless unchangeably fixed upon them, inasmuch as 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'^h—Further, Christ's love is infinitely condescending. Its condescension arises not only from the infinite distance which there is between him and his people, but from his remembering them in their low estate, having compassion on them whom no eye pitied, and saving them when they were in the utmost depths of despair and misery, 'saying to them when they were in their blood, Live.'ⁱ—Again, his love is not like the love of strangers, which contents itself with some general endeavours to do good to persons whom they designed not to contract an intimacy with ; but it is attended with the highest acts of friendship and communion, imparting his secrets to them, as he promises 'to love them, and manifest himself to them,'^k and tells his disciples, 'Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.'^l—Moreover, it is such a love as forgives all former injuries, and upbraids not his people for what they have done against him, either before or since they believed in him. Thus God is said to 'pardon the iniquity and pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ;' to 'cast all their sins into the depths of the sea ;'^m and to 'blot out their transgressions for his own sake, and not to remember their sins.'ⁿ—Again, it is such a love as affords us all seasonable and necessary help in times of our greatest straits and difficulties,^o and makes provision for our future necessities. Thus he told his disciples, 'I go to prepare a place for you,'^p that they might be assured of being happy in another world ; and accordingly he said, in his mediatorial prayer, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.'^q—Further, it is such a love as puts him upon reckoning all injuries done against his people as though they were done against himself, and the kindnesses expressed to them as though they were expressed to him. Thus it is said, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye ;'^r and, 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me.'^s And when he takes notice of those expressions of kindness which his people had shown to one another, he says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'^t—Finally, it is such a love as inclines him to interpose between his people and all danger ; and so he prevents their being overcome by their enemies. Indeed, he not only hazarded, but, as 'a good shepherd, gave his life for his sheep.'^u This, then, is that love which is to be the subject of our meditation in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. Accordingly, we are first to endeavour to make out our interest in it by faith, which will be evinced by those acts of love to him that flow from it ; and then we may rejoice in it as a constant spring of peace and blessedness.

f Heb. vi. 25.
k John xiv. 21.
o Psal. xlv. 1.
s Luke x. 16.

g Ezek. xvi. 14.
l Chap. xv. 15.
p John xiv. 2.
t Matt. xxv. 40.

h John xiii. 1.
m Micah vii. 18, 19.
q Chap. xvii. 24.
u John x. 11.

i Ezek. xvi. 6.
n Isa. xliii. 25.
r Zech. ii. 8.

7. The next grace to be exercised in this ordinance, is thankfulness. We are to adore and praise God that he has been pleased to extend compassion to us in bestowing those blessings which are the result of his discriminating grace. The instances of this grace are various: he delivers us from the ruin which sin would have inevitably brought upon us; bestows upon us the blessings of goodness, and restrains the breaking forth of our corruptions, which would otherwise have inclined us to commit the vilest abominations; more especially, he renews our nature, changes our hearts, creates us unto good works, and then quickens and excites that grace in us which his own hand has wrought, comforts us when our spirits are overwhelmed with sorrow, enables us to go on in his way rejoicing, and so carries on the work which he has begun in us, till it be completed in glory. There is nothing which we have, either in hand or in hope, but what will afford matter for the exercise of thankfulness. In particular, our hearts ought to be excited to it from the consideration of the benefits which are signified in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; especially if we are enabled to receive them by faith.

8. We are, at the Lord's supper, to renew our covenant with God. That this may be rightly understood, we must consider what it is for a believer to enter into covenant with God, which he is supposed to have done before. This does not consist in our promising that we will do those things which are out of our power, or that we will exercise those graces which none but God, who works in his people both to will and to do, can enable us to put forth; but it consists in our making a surrender of ourselves to Christ, and depending on him for the supply of all our spiritual wants, humbly hoping and trusting that he will enable us to adhere steadfastly to him, working in us all that grace which he requires of us; and if he is pleased to grant us this blessing, we shall be enabled to perform all the duties which are incumbent on us, how difficult soever they may be. This is an unexceptionable way of entering into covenant with God, as it contains an acknowledgment of our own inability without him to do that which is good, and a desire to give the glory of all to him; on whom we steadfastly rely, that we may obtain mercy from him to be faithful. Moreover, to renew our covenant, is to declare that, through his grace, we are inclined steadfastly to adhere to our solemn dedication to him, not in the least repenting of what we did in it; and that we have as much reason to depend on his assistance now as we had at first, since grace is carried on as well as begun by him alone. Accordingly, while we express our earnest desire to be steadfast in his covenant, we depend on his promise that he will never fail us, nor forsake us. And we especially avail ourselves of observing the Lord's supper to renew our dedication to him, as our doing so is very agreeable to the nature of this ordinance; in which we have the external symbols of his love to us, which lays us under the highest obligation to be dedicated to him.

9. We are in this ordinance to show our readiness to exercise a Christian love to all saints. This consists more especially in our earnest desire that all grace and peace may abound in them, as in our own souls; that so they and we may have occasion to glorify God together, and show concern for one another's spiritual welfare. We are to bless God for the grace they are enabled to exercise, though, it may be, we cannot exercise it in the same degree ourselves. As for others, we are to sympathize with them in their weaknesses, grieve for their falls and miscarriages, and be very ready to make abatements for such of their frailties and infirmities as we ourselves are sometimes liable to, especially if they are not inconsistent with grace, and we are to cast a mantle of love over these, not knowing but we may be exposed to and fall by the same temptations which have overcome them. This love to all Christians is to be expressed, more especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; inasmuch as we are to consider all saints as members of Christ's mystical body, children of the same God and Father, partakers of the same grace with us, fellow-travellers to the same heavenly country, where we hope to meet them at last, though now they are liable to the same difficulties with ourselves, and exposed to those assaults and temptations which we often meet with from our spiritual enemies. Moreover, though our love is to be more immediately and directly extended to the society who join in communion with us; yet it is not to be confined within such narrow limits, but includes the highest esteem for all who are

sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, though their place of abode be remote, and they are not known to us in the flesh.

Duties After Observing the Lord's Supper.

We are now to consider the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This consists in inquiring how they behaved themselves in it; and whether they have any ground to conclude that they were favoured with the special presence of God in it, so that it has been made a means of grace to them.

As to the frame of our spirits, while engaging in this solemn duty, we shall sometimes find that it has been such as affords matter for deep humiliation and self-abasement in the sight of God, when we reflect upon it. In particular, we have reason to blame our conduct in this ordinance, when our minds and affections have been conversant about those things which are altogether unsuitable to the work we have been engaged in; and when, instead of conversing with Christ in the ordinance, we have had our thoughts and meditations taken up chiefly with worldly matters. Or even if they have been conversant about religious affairs, we may, in some measure, see reason to blame ourselves, if these have been altogether foreign to the great end and design of the ordinance we have been engaged in. There are many portions of scripture, or topics in divinity founded upon it, which we may employ our thoughts about at other times, with great advantage, but which may not be altogether adapted to our receiving spiritual advantage from Christ crucified, or to our making a right improvement of him, as the nature of this ordinance requires. Again, they behave themselves unbecomingly in this ordinance, who meditate on the thing signified in it, namely, the dying love of Jesus Christ, as though they were unconcerned spectators; having only an historical faith, and contenting themselves with the knowledge of what merely relates to the life and death of Christ, without considering the end and design of them, namely, that he might make atonement for sin, or considering their particular concern in that atonement, so as to improve it as an expedient for taking away the guilt and power of sin in their own souls. Further, we may reflect on our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have given way to deadness and stupidity, without using those endeavours which are necessary for the exciting of our affections; when a subject so affecting as Christ's pouring out his soul unto death, being wounded for our transgressions, despised and rejected of men, bleeding and dying on the cross, and in the midst of his sufferings crying out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' has not had an efficacy to raise our affections, any more than if it were a common subject. Moreover, we have reason to blame our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have attended on it with a resolution to continue in any known sin, without being earnest with God to mortify it, or desiring strength and grace from Christ, and improving his death, in order to the accomplishment of that end. Thus we have sometimes reason to reflect, with grief and sorrow of heart, on our behaviour at the Lord's supper, as what has been disagreeable to the nature of the ordinance.

But, on the other hand, we may sometimes, in taking a view of our behaviour at the Lord's supper, find matter of encouragement; when, abating for human frailties, and the imperfection of grace, which inseparably attend the present state, we can say, to the glory of God, that we have, in some measure, behaved ourselves as we ought to do. In particular, if our hearts have been duly affected with the love of Christ, and we have had the exercise of corresponding graces; and if we can say that we have had some communion with him, and have not been altogether destitute of his quickening and comforting presence, and the witness of his Spirit with ours that we are the children of God; then we may conclude that we have engaged in this ordinance in a right manner;—and if we have found that it has been thus with us, we are to bless God for it; considering that he alone can excite grace in us, who wrought it at first. Such acts of grace, too, will be a good evidence of its truth and sincerity, and will tend to establish our comfort, and to enable us to walk more closely and thankfully with God. Moreover, if we have had experience of the

presence of God in the ordinance, and have been brought into a good frame, we ought to beg the continuance of these. The best frame of spirit will be no longer abiding than it pleases God to keep up the lively exercise of faith and other graces; and this, being so valuable a blessing, is to be sought for by fervent prayer and supplication, that our good frames may not be like the morning cloud, or early dew, that soon passes away. Our seeking a continuance of these will discover that we set a value upon them, and glorify God as the author of them; and it is the best expedient for our walking with God at other times, as well as when engaged in holy ordinances.

Again, it is observed that they who have been quickened and comforted, when partaking of the Lord's supper, ought to watch against relapses into those sins which formerly they were overtaken with, but now see reason to abhor. This we ought to do, because, though we are sometimes brought into a good frame, we still have deceitful hearts, which, before we are aware, may betray us into the commission of such sins as have occasioned great distress to us in times past; and, we are subject also to the endeavours of Satan to ensnare us by his wiles, so that when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we may be exposed to the greatest dangers. When we have been least apprehensive of our return to our former sins, and, it may be, have been too secure in our own opinion, while confiding too much to our own strength, we have lost our good frames, and our troubles have been renewed. It is hence our duty to watch against the secret workings of corrupt nature, and the first motions of sin in our hearts; while we earnestly implore help from God that we may be kept from our own iniquities,—namely, those sins which we have formerly committed, or which more easily beset us.

The next duty incumbent on us, after we have received the Lord's supper, is, to fulfil our vows. This will be better understood, if compared with what was formerly observed concerning sacramental vows or covenants. These ought not to include a making of promises, especially in our own strength, that we will be found in the exercise of those graces which are the special gift and effect of God's almighty power. Hence, I always, when mentioning the making of religious vows, consider them principally as containing an express declaration, that we are under an indispensable obligation to perform those duties, and put forth those acts of grace, which are incumbent on us, as those who desire to approve ourselves Christ's faithful servants, and whom he has taken into a covenant relation with himself. We also, in making a vow, declare that, without help from God, we can do nothing. This help we implore from him at the time when we devote or give ourselves up to him. Hence, we devote ourselves to him, hoping and trusting that he will bestow upon us that grace which is out of our own power; and we determine that, if he will be pleased to do this, he shall have all the glory that accrues. This explanation of vowing is most agreeable to the sense of the Latin word^x whence the word 'vow' is derived; and, I think, it is much rather to be acquiesced in than the general description which some give of it. These exhort persons who are engaged in this ordinance, to confess those sins which they have committed since they were last at the Lord's table, so far as they occur to their memories; and, as a means of their obtaining forgiveness, to make a solemn vow or promise that they will abstain from them for the future, and walk more agreeably to the engagements which they are laid under. Persons who act on this view, make their vow or solemn promise without an humble sense of the treachery of their own hearts, or their need of strength from God to perform any thing that is good; and afterwards they are as little inclined to fulfil their own promises as they were before forward to make them, with too much reliance on their own strength; and they, in consequence, bring themselves into the greatest perplexities, and go on, as it were, in a round of making solemn vows and resolutions, and then breaking them, and afterwards renewing them. On the other hand, to confess that what others promise in their own strength, we see ourselves obliged to do, and, at the same time, to depend on Christ for strength to enable us to perform it, and give ourselves up to him, as his covenant people, in hope of receiving that strength, is the safest way of vowing; for it redounds most to the honour of God, and includes every thing which may put us

upon using our utmost endeavours to perform the duties which are incumbent on us, and, at the same time, expresses our unfeigned desire to glorify God as the God and Author of that grace which is necessary to our performing these duties. In this sense I would understand what we are exhorted to do in the Answers we are explaining, when it is said that, while we are receiving the Lord's supper, we ought to renew our covenant with God, and that after we have received it, we are to fulfil our vows. The former of these duties includes such a dedication to God as has just been considered; the latter, namely, the fulfilling of our vows, implies a doing of every thing which is in our power, in order to our fulfilling them, and, at the same time, a waiting on God to give success to our endeavours, and to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, without which we can do nothing. [See Note 2 B, page 549.]

After we have waited on the Lord in this ordinance, we are to encourage ourselves to a frequent attendance on it; especially if we have ground to conclude that we have had any sensible communications of his grace vouchsafed to us while observing it. As the imparting of a sense of his comforting presence is an honour which God puts on his own institutions, it is certainly an encouragement to us to persevere in waiting on him in them. Thus the psalmist says, 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.'^y Our having experienced God's comforting and quickening presence in our attending on the Lord's supper, will effectually remove all those doubts and scruples which discourage us from engaging in it, fearing that we shall not behave ourselves in a right manner in it, that we are not sufficiently prepared for it, and that we shall be disowned by Christ when we engage in it. But, suppose we have not enjoyed this comforting and quickening presence of God which the best believers do not, at all times, experience in a like degree; then we ought, after we have received the Lord's supper, to endeavour to find out the particular cause of God's withdrawing it from us, and what is that root of bitterness which springs up and troubles us. It may be he withholds this privilege from us in a way of sovereignty, that we may learn that our comforts are not at our own disposal, or that they are not the necessary result of our attendance on ordinances, but arise from the divine blessing accompanying them. Or it may be, he withholds this blessing from us for the trial of our graces; and that we may see how needful it is for us to wait for those spiritual comforts which, at present, he withholds from us. Thus the prophet says, 'Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.'^z As, however, we may, for the most part, apprehend some particular reason, connected with sins of omission or commission before or during our observance of the ordinance, why God denies us his quickening and comforting presence, we must inquire whether there was not some defect as to preparatory duties; in particular, whether we duly examined ourselves before we came to the Lord's table, concerning our knowledge of Christ and the benefits of his redemption, and especially concerning our being enabled to improve them by faith; and whether we examined ourselves concerning the sense we have of the guilt of sin, and the need we stand in of Christ's righteousness to take it away, and accordingly resolved to wait on him in this ordinance with earnest desires of obtaining this privilege. We must also inquire whether our behaviour, when we were engaged in observing the Lord's supper, was not, in some measure, unbecoming the spirituality and importance of the ordinance; whether we have not spared or indulged some secret corruption, which broke forth while we were engaged in it; whether we have not given way to some temptation, which then beset us; whether we have not depended on our own righteousness, for taking away the guilt of sin, and procuring for us acceptance in the sight of God. We must inquire especially whether we did not engage in the ordinance in our own strength, and by our self-confidence provoke him to withdraw from us. If we did this, we must practise deep humiliation in his sight, repentance and reformation, in order to our being guarded against the inconvenience which we at present labour under; and then we may

hope that we shall be enabled to wait on him in this ordinance, in such a way that we may have those comfortable experiences of grace from him, which will be an evidence that we have waited on him for the better and not for the worse.

[NOTE 2 B. *Covenanting and Vowing*.—Such utterly mistaken views of the Lord's supper, of Christian character, and even of the way of salvation, have, in the experience of multitudes, been suggested or confirmed by exhortations to communicants to renew their covenant with God, and make or fulfil vows to him, that inquiry becomes imperative whether the idea, on the one hand, of observing the Lord's supper, and the idea, on the other, of covenanting and vowing, are legitimately connected. Dr. Ridgeley explains the words of the Catechism, 'renewing their covenant with God,' and the correlative words often used in popular addresses, 'making or fulfilling vows, in a sense to which—apart from association with communicating in the Lord's supper—there cannot be any objection. He, in fact, denudes both phrases of their distinctive meaning; and, without formally omitting them, or even appearing to think them improper, divests them of all the ofensive ideas which they are usually employed to express. Making a vow, according to his explanation, is simply to declare to ourselves, or to recognise, our duty to be the Lord's, to feel our utter weakness, and to look to the God of all grace for strength and guidance to enable and direct us to walk worthy of our high calling; while, to 'renew our covenant,' is to believe the promises of the well-ordered and everlasting covenant which God has established, and to give ourselves up to him as his covenant people—or as those to whom his covenant has been made known—in hope of receiving from him grace to fight a good fight, and keep the faith, and lay hold of eternal life. But to act in this way is just the distinctive conduct of a believer in Jesus, incumbent on him at every season, especially appropriate in every religious or devotional exercise in which he engages, and daily, or even hourly, requisite in order to his spiritual health and comfort; and why should it either be associated distinctively, much less exclusively, with the observance of the ordinance of the supper, or be designated by a phrase so inexpressive of its nature, and, at the same time, so very liable to misconstruction, as 'making vows' and 'renewing a covenant?'

Vowing, in the strict or literal sense, or as practised under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, is not, I suppose, contended for by any persons as a duty enjoined by the law of Christ. Even a cursory examination of the texts which mention it—especially those which occur in the Sinaitic law, (see *inter alia*, Lev. xx. 18; xxiii. 38; Numb. xxix. 39; xv. 3.)—will hardly fail to convince any man that, under the Mosaic dispensation, it was connected with the ceremonies and duties of the typical system, and that, in its own nature and objects, it belonged to a state of things precurrent and introductory to the completed revelation and the spiritual worship of the Christian dispensation. What is now contended for, under the designation of 'making vows,' is not any act which may, like the vowing mentioned in scripture, be connected with typical sacrifices and offerings, but something which is made to comport with the elementary and pervading duty of believing on Christ, as having once for all made an atonement by which we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. But is it right, is it useful, is it safe, to retain the phrase when what is designated differs widely from the vowing practised under the introductory dispensations? If making and performing vows of old occupied, as to its nature, essentially the same ground as presenting a trespass offering, or paying tithes, or performing ablution, or any other act connected with a prefigurative and temporary economy; is there not danger, when men are exhorted now to make and perform vows in a literal sense, that they may suppose the resources of their duty, and consequently the resources of their entire well-being, to be in as close a sense their own, or at least as easily available, as the Israelite did his flocks, the fruits of his field, or the water of the running stream? Are not ideas of self-reliance, indeed, actually engendered and nursed by appeals to professing Christians to make and perform vows,—vows of *their own*, framed by *themselves*, and extraneous to the direct obligations of the law of Christ? The truth, I suspect, is, that the Romish doctrine, or the doctrine of the scholastic theology, respecting the connexion of vowing with the *false* and *rejected* sacraments of matrimony, penance, and holy orders, and with the supererogatory works of celibacy, viduity, poverty, and seclusion from active life, was inadvertently retained, though in a modified form, by the Reformers from popery, and still exerts a strong but undetected influence on the minds of evangelical men attached to the spirit of modern antiquity, in connexion with the *retained* "sacraments," the admitted ordinances of Christ, the institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper. But, if my conjecture be erroneous, at least, let the advocates of Christian vowing point to the text of the New Testament in which the practice, as they explain it, is sanctioned, either in a general way, or especially as part of the reception of baptism, or of the showing of the death of Christ.

As to covenanting,—the primary idea, in scripture, of making a covenant, appears to be God's making promises to man ratified by sacrifice; the secondary idea, man's making promises to man, whether ratified by sacrifice or not; and the collateral or figurative idea, any act or institution or document in which a covenant is exhibited, or with which it is connected. But a fourth idea of a covenant, or that which represents it as a thing made by man with God, seems to be entirely extra-scriptural. Take the word covenant in any one scriptural sense which it will bear, or display it in the light of any one text of the divine word in which it occurs, it cannot, so far as I am aware, be made to designate any state of things whatever between man and God, which *originates with man*. Such a sense of the word is of comparatively very recent date, and must surely soon give way to a wise and reverential use of scripture terms—particularly of highly expressive ones—in senses which scripture warrants.

Even, moreover, if language about making vows and renewing a covenant, in observing the Lord's supper, could be vindicated, what is gained, what wise or really useful end is accom-

plished, by using it? The divinely simple, divinely sublime commands, 'This do in remembrance of me,' 'Show ye the Lord's death till he come,' express, with incomparably more clearness, the distinctive duties included in communicating in that ordinance, than the most elaborate and complex appeals into which the profoundest distinctions of scholastic divinity and morality could be woven. To remember the Saviour and to show his death—to meditate on his love, exercise reliance on the merits of his sacrifice, and expatiate, in faith, and hope, and adoring wonder, on the glorious results of his mediatorial work—are clearly the grand duties involved in partaking the emblems of his broken body and shed blood.—ED.]

THE CORRESPONDENCE AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

QUESTION CLXXVI. *Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree?*

ANSWER. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree, in that the author of both is God, the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant, are to be dispensed by ministers of the gospel, and by none other, and to be continued in the church of Christ until his second coming.

QUESTION CLXXVII. *Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?*

ANSWER. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once with water; to be a sign and seal of our regeneration, and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants, whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

THESE two Answers contain little more than a recapitulation of some things which have been occasionally mentioned, in explaining the nature of these ordinances; and therefore we shall very briefly insist on them.

Correspondence between Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We shall first consider those things in which the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree.

1. It is observed that God is the Author of both. That he is so may be inferred from what has been said concerning their being holy ordinances, or means of grace; in which we are to expect his presence and blessing, to make them effectual to salvation. Now we cannot expect this without engaging in them by his own warrant; and this he has been pleased to give us, as appears from his word, and the experience of many believers. Not a few of his people have found sensible advantage from observing these ordinances; so that the effects of his power and grace which have been produced in their hearts when engaged in them, afford a convincing evidence that God is their Author. This, as concerns baptism, respects more especially the baptism of those who are adult; for when infants are baptized, though God can and sometimes does, as is more than probable, own this ordinance by regenerating them at the time of their receiving it, yet his doing so cannot be known by us, unless it be inferred from the extraordinary communications of grace which those may experience who are enabled by faith to give up their children to God in that ordinance.

2. Baptism and the Lord's supper farther agree, in Christ and his benefits being signified by both of them. For both are ordinances for our faith, as they are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, in which Christ and the benefits of his redemption are set forth. Thus the apostle says, with respect to baptism, 'So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death, buried with him by baptism into death.'^a Accordingly, we have communion with Christ as crucified, dying, and buried, and as afterwards rising from the dead, and so bringing the work of redemption to perfection. These things are signified in baptism; and thus our faith is to make use of the sign. And the apostle says the same thing

^a Rom. vi. 3, 4.

with respect to the Lord's supper : ' As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.'^b

3. Baptism and the Lord's supper are farther observed to agree, in their being to be dispensed by none but the ministers of the gospel. Under the Old Testament-dispensation, all the parts of the temple-service being significant signs of Christ and the benefits of the covenant of grace, were to be administered by none but those who were qualified, called, and lawfully set apart to the work ; as the apostle says, ' No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.'^c And we may conclude that the moral reason of the thing extends itself to the administration of the seals of the covenant, under the gospel-dispensation. It is certain that some must be appointed or set apart to the work of dispensing the ordinance, otherwise it would belong to every body, and there would be no determinate administrators of these ordinances, who might be said to have a special call to this work from God and man. The point may be inferred also from those scriptures which speak of ' pastors after God's own heart,' who are to ' feed' his people ' with knowledge and understanding,' as being his special ' gift ;'^d and from what the apostle says concerning gospel-ministers, whether extraordinary or ordinary, that they were Christ's ' gift' when he ' ascended up on high.'^e

4. It is farther observed, that these two ordinances agree, in their being both to be continued in the church until Christ's second coming. Though we look and hope for more of the presence of God in them, and a greater effusion of his Spirit to make them more effectual, and render the church more bright and glorious, as being favoured with greater degrees of the communications of divine grace ; yet we have no ground to expect new ordinances, or a new dispensation to succeed this which we are under, till Christ's second and most glorious coming. Hence, the present dispensation is called, ' the last time.'^f Hence also the apostle says that ' the ends of the world are come upon us ;'^g by which we are to understand, that the dispensation of the gospel which we are under, is the last we are to expect till Christ's second coming. That the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper are to continue till Christ's second coming, appears also from the promise which Christ has given of his presence with his ministers and churches, when faithfully engaging in them. He says, ' Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'^h The fact, too, that his ' death' is to be ' showed forth till he come,'ⁱ proves that the Lord's supper is to be continued in the church till then. This I rather observe that it is contrary to what some maintain, who, while they hope for a greater effusion of the Spirit, and a more glorious state of the church in the latter day, are ready to extend their thoughts too far, and conclude that the dispensation which they hope for will be new, and that the ordinances which the church is at present favoured with shall cease, particularly baptism and the Lord's supper. This opinion we can by no means approve.

The Difference between Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We are now to consider wherein the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ.

1. It is observed that they differ in this, that baptism is to be administered but once, while the Lord's supper is to be administered often. This appears from two different circumstances contained in them. As for baptism, it signifies our first ingrafting into or putting on Christ ; and when denominated from the thing signified by it, it is called ' the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,'^k which is hoped for in this ordinance. Accordingly, it is considered as our first solemn dedication to Christ ; and, as this is signified by it, it is called an initiating ordinance, in which we are bound to be the Lord's. Now, the bond which then obliges us to be his holds good as long as we live, and therefore needs not to be signified, sealed, or confirmed by our being baptized a second time. But, on the other hand, the Lord's supper signifies our feeding or living upon Christ, and

b 1 Cor. xi. 26.

g 1 Cor. x. 11.

c Heb. v. 4.

h Matt. xxviii. 20.

d Jer. iii. 15.

i 1 Cor. xi. 26.

e Eph. iv. 8, 11.

f 1 John ii. 18.

k Titus iii. 5.

receiving daily supplies of grace from him, as our necessities require. Hence, this ordinance differs from baptism as it is often to be engaged in.

2. They differ in this, that the former, as was formerly proved, is to be applied, not only to the adult, if they have not been baptized before, but to the infants of believing parents, while the Lord's supper is not. In baptism, the person dedicated may be considered as passive, and as devoted to God by the faith of another, who has a right so to devote him. But none are to partake of the Lord's supper but those who have such a degree of knowledge that they are able to discern the Lord's body, and capable of performing that duty which the apostle recommends as necessary to the performing of it, when he says, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.'¹

I am sensible that some of the ancient church, and particularly Cyprian, in the third century, pleaded for and practised the administration of the Lord's supper to infants, having been led into this mistake by supposing what does not sufficiently appear, namely, that infants among the Jews eat the passover, because whole families are said to have eaten it. But the passover does not appear to have been given to infants; for whom another sort of food was designed. Nor could they have reaped any advantage by it, not being capable of discerning the thing signified, or feeding on Christ, the true paschal Lamb; which could be done no other-wise than by faith. Others were led into the mistake of administering the Lord's supper to infants, from the wrong sense they gave of the scripture in which Christ says, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.'^m They thought that our Saviour meant here the bread and wine in the Lord's supper; that therefore this ordinance was absolutely necessary to salvation; and that it ought, in consequence, to be extended to infants, as a means of their obtaining it. But it is certain this cannot be the meaning of our Lord's words; since the Lord's supper was not instituted, or known in the church, when our Saviour spake them. He intends nothing else by them but the fiducial application of his death, as an expedient for our obtaining eternal life.

THE KINDS AND PARTS OF PRAYER.

QUESTION CLXXVIII. *What is Prayer?*

ANSWER. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

HAVING considered the things which are to be believed and done, what remains is, to inquire concerning those things which are to be prayed for, and how the great duty of prayer is to be performed. It is necessary that we should insist on this subject. For, while we are obliged to yield obedience to the revealed will of God, we can, by reason of our depravity and weakness, do nothing which is good without his assistance. Now, that assistance is not to be expected, unless it be humbly desired of him; and the desiring of it is what we generally call prayer. As this duty is performed by creatures who are not only indigent but unworthy, we are to acknowledge that we are so; and accordingly we are, in prayer, to confess sin as the principal ground and reason of our unworthiness. And inasmuch as God has been pleased to encourage us to hope that we shall not seek his face in vain, and, in many instances, is pleased to grant returns of prayer; we are under obligation to draw nigh to him with thanksgiving. These things are particularly contained in the Answer we are explaining. The method in which we shall endeavour to discuss them is to consider, first, what prayer supposes; secondly, what are the various kinds of prayer; and thirdly, what are its various parts.

What Prayer Supposes.

1. Prayer supposes that we are dependent and indigent creatures, have many wants to be supplied, sins to be forgiven, miseries under which we need pity and relief, and weaknesses under which we want to be strengthened and assisted in order to the performance of the duties which are incumbent on us. It may hence be inferred that, though our Lord Jesus Christ is often represented as praying to God, prayer was an action performed by him in his human nature; in which alone he could be said to be indigent, who, in his divine nature, is all-sufficient.

2. Prayer supposes that God, who is the object of it, is regarded by us not only as able, but as willing to help; and that he has encouraged us to draw nigh to him for relief. Hence, it is a duty which more especially belongs to those who are favoured with the hope of the gospel.

The Various Kinds of Prayer.

We shall now show how prayer is to be considered as to its various kinds. We are represented as drawing nigh to God, with an humble sense of our secret sins and wants, which none but God and our own consciences are privy to. This kind of prayer our Saviour intends when he says, 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'ⁿ We have an instance of it in himself; for it is said, 'When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.'^o Peter also 'went upon the house-top to pray;'^p where, being retired from the world, he had a greater liberty to pour forth his soul unto God.

Moreover, we are to join with others in performing this duty; and then we confess those sins and implore a supply of those wants which are common to all who are engaged. This our Saviour encourages us to do when he says, 'If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'^q This is a branch of social worship, and is to be performed by every family apart. Of this we have an example in Cornelius, concerning whom it is said, that he was 'a devout man, and feared God, with all his house, and prayed to him always;' and that he did this at certain times, 'in his house.'^r Moreover, this duty is to be performed publicly in the church, or any worshipping assembly met together for that purpose. Of this we have an instance in the apostle Paul, who, when he had called for the elders of the church at Ephesus, designing to take his leave of them, after an affectionate discourse, and suitable advice given to them, 'kneeling down and prayed with them all.'^s

Again, prayer may be considered as that for which a stated time is set apart by us, either alone, or with others; or, that which is occasional, short, and ejaculatory, consisting in a secret lifting up of our hearts to God, and which may be performed when we are engaged in other business of a different nature, without being a let or hinderance to it. Thus it is said, that Nehemiah prayed when he was going to 'deliver the cup into the king's hand,' between the king's asking him a question, and his returning him an answer to it. This seems to be the meaning of what is said in Nehem. ii. 4, 5, 'Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king,' &c. Ejaculatory prayers are such as we put up to God, either while engaged in worldly business, for direction, assistance, or success in it, or when attending on the word read or preached, or any other holy duties, for his presence in them.

n Matt. vi. 6.

o Chap. xiv. 23.

p Acts x. 9.

q Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

r Acts x. 2, compared with verse 30.

s Chap. xx. 36.

The Various Parts of Prayer.

The next thing to be considered, is, the various parts of prayer. These are three,—confession of sin, petition for a supply of our wants, and thanksgiving for mercies received. Confession of sin supposes that we are guilty, and deserve punishment from God; petition supposes that we are miserable and helpless; and thanksgiving implies a disposition to own God as the author of all the good we enjoy or hope for, and includes a due sense of those undeserved favours we have received from him.

From this general account of the parts of prayer, we may infer that the two former, namely, confession of sin, and petition for relief, under the various miseries and distresses to which we are liable, are applicable to those only who are in a sinful and imperfect state, as believers are in this world. As for glorified saints in heaven, they have no sins to be confessed, nor any miseries under which they need help and pity. That part of prayer, indeed, which consists of thanksgiving for mercies already received, is agreeable to a perfect state, and is represented as the constant work of glorified saints. Thus the psalmist says, ‘The heavens,’ that is, the inhabitants of them, ‘shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.’^t Again, sinners who have lost their day of grace, against whom the door of hope and mercy is shut, who are enduring the punishment of sin in hell, are not properly the subjects of prayer. Concerning them it may be said, not only that they cannot pray, being destitute of those graces which are necessary to the performance of it, but that they have no interest in a Mediator, or in the promises of the covenant of grace, which are a warrant and encouragement for performing it. Further, in this world, where we enjoy the means of grace, none are the subjects of prayer but man. The Psalmist, indeed, speaks of God’s ‘giving to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry;’^u and elsewhere it is said, ‘He provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God.’^x But the meaning of these texts is, not that brute creatures formally address themselves to God for a supply of their wants, having no idea of a Divine Being; but that, when they complain for want of food, the providence of God supplies them, though they know not the hand whence it comes. Moreover, though it is the duty of all men in the world to pray; yet none can pray by faith, and, consequently, in an acceptable manner, but believers; concerning whom the apostle says, ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.’^y

As for the first part of prayer, namely, petition, or supplication, it will be particularly considered under several following Answers, especially those that contain an explanation of the Lord’s prayer; which is a directory for what we are to ask of God. Hence, we shall, at present, consider only the other two parts of prayer, namely, confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies.

I. We shall speak first concerning confession of sin.

1. This duty is indispensably incumbent on all men. It is incumbent, not only on those who are in a state of unregeneracy, and consequently under the dominion of sin, but on believers themselves, who are in a justified state. This will appear, if we consider that not to confess sin, is, in effect, to justify ourselves in the commission of it, and as it were, to deny that which is well-known to the heart-searching God, as well as to our own consciences. It includes also a charging God with injustice, when he inflicts on us the punishment which is due to sin; and so opposes what is said by Ezra, ‘Thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.’^z Moreover, none was ever truly humbled in the sight of God, or obtained mercy and forgiveness of sin, but he was first brought to confess it with suitable affection, and brokenness of heart; which are ingredients in true repentance. Thus it is said, ‘He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.’^a It is also said, ‘He that

^t Psal. lxxxix. 5.

^z Ezra ix. 13.

^u Psal. cxlvii. 9.

^a Job xxxiii. 27, 28.

^x Job xxxviii. 41.

^y Rom. viii. 15.

covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.'^b This duty of confessing sin is so evident, that, one would think, no one who duly considers what he is, or how contrary his actions are to the revealed will of God, should have the front to deny its obligation. Yet it is well-known that many seem designedly to wave all confession of sin in prayer; and that others argue against it, more especially, as to the case of believers.

It is objected that believers ought not to confess sin, because to do so is inconsistent with a justified state; it is in effect, to plead guilty, though God has taken away the guilt of sin, by forgiving it for the sake of the atonement which Christ has made; it is a laying open of the wound which God hath healed and closed up, or a bringing to remembrance that which he hath said, 'he will remember no more';^c and it is contrary to the grace of God, who hath said, none shall 'lay any thing to the charge' of his 'elect,' since 'it is God that justifieth.'^d We reply, that we must distinguish between a believer's desert of punishment or condemnation, and his being actually punished by God, as a sin-revenging Judge, according as his iniquities deserve. That a believer shall not eventually fall under condemnation, is true; because his sins are forgiven, and 'there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'^e Still, though he is in a justified state, and, in consequence, shall be undoubtedly saved; yet, according to the tenor of his own actions, he, being a sinner, contracts guilt in the sight of God. And a desert of punishment is inseparably connected with every sin; though a person who commits it may be in a justified state. It is one thing to be liable to condemnation, and another thing to deserve to be condemned. The former is, indeed, inconsistent with a justified state; but the latter is not. And it is in this sense that we are to understand the psalmist's words, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'^f Accordingly, the best believer on earth, though he have a full assurance of his being forgiven by God, yet inasmuch as he is a sinner, is obliged to confess that he deserves to be cast off by him, and that, if God should deal with him according to what he finds in him, without looking upon him as he is in Christ, his head and surety, he would be undone and lost for ever. Again, believers are daily sinning, and therefore contracting fresh guilt; as it is said, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.'^g Indeed, their sin is often so great, that they grieve the Holy Spirit, wound their own consciences, and act very disagreeably to their character as believers. Their sins, therefore, ought to be confessed with shame and self-abhorrence; as the prophet says, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame; when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.'^h Moreover, it is certain that believers, when they have had a discovery that their sin was pardoned, have at the same time confessed it with great humility. Thus, immediately after Nathan had reproved David for his sin, and told him, upon his repentance, that 'the Lord had put it away,'ⁱ he made a penitent confession of it before God, and said, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.'^k

2. We shall now consider with what frame of spirit sin is to be confessed. First, we are to confess sin with a due sense of its infinite evil, as it reflects dishonour on the divine perfections, and particularly as it is opposite to the holiness and purity of God, and a contempt cast on his law, which expressly forbids it, and a disregarding of the threatenings denounced by that law against those who violate it, and renders us liable to his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge, pursuant to its intrinsic demerit. It is therefore justly styled 'an evil thing and bitter';—it is the only thing which can be called a moral evil; and it is certainly bitter in its consequences.—Again, we are to confess sin with humility, shame, confusion of face, and self-abhorrence; and that more especially, by reason of the vile ingratitude there is in it, as committed by those who are under the greatest engagements to the contrary duties.—Further, sin is to be confessed with hope of obtaining forgiveness through

b Prov. xxviii. 13.

f Psal. cxxx. 3.

k Psal. li. 4.

c Heb. x. 17.

g Eccles. vii. 20.

d Rom. viii. 33.

h Ezek. xvi. 63.

e Ver. 1.

i 2 Sam. xii. 13.

the blood of Christ, as laying hold on the promises of mercy which are made to those who confess and forsake it;¹ and with an earnest desire to be delivered from its prevailing power, by strength derived from Christ.

3. We shall now consider what sins we are to confess before God. These are, either the sin of our nature, or those actual transgressions which proceed from it.

We are to confess the sin of our nature. As fallen creatures, we are destitute of the image of God; and, having contracted corrupt habits, by repeated acts of rebellion against him, all the powers and faculties of our souls are vitiated; and we are not only indisposed and disinclined to what is good, but naturally bent to backslide from God, and to commit the greatest abominations, if destitute of his preventing, restraining, or renewing grace. Thus the apostle says, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.'^m Sin is to be considered as what has universally defiled and depraved our nature; and therefore we ought to cry out with the leper, 'Unclean, unclean;'ⁿ or, in the words of the prophet, 'From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.'^o We are to consider it as insinuating itself into our best duties; as like the fly which corrupts the precious ointment; and as of such a nature that, when we have been enabled to gain some advantage against it, it will afterwards recover strength, notwithstanding all our endeavours to the contrary. It is like an incurable disease in the body, which, though we endeavour to keep it under for a while, yet will prevail again, till the frame of nature is demolished, and thereby all diseases cured at once. When, however, we confess and are humbled for this propensity which is in our nature to sin, we are to pray and hope that the prevailing power of it may be so far weakened that, by the principle of grace, implanted in regeneration, and excited by the Spirit in promoting the work of sanctification, though it dwells in us, it may not entirely have dominion over us, or we be denominated the servants of sin.

We are to confess also the many actual sins which we daily commit, with all their respective aggravations; sins of omission and commission, both of which are mentioned in the apostle's confession, 'The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'^p Our sinful neglects of duty are numberless. We are to confess our not having redeemed our time, but spent it in those trifles and vain amusements which profit not; particularly if we have misimproved the very flower and best part of our time and strength, and not remembered our Creator in the days of our youth. This Job reckons the principal ground and reason of the evils which befell him in his advanced age, when he says, 'Thou writest bitter things against me; and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'^q We are humbly to confess also our not having improved, and, in consequence, lost many opportunities for extraordinary service, either to do or to get good. Thus the prophet says, 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.'^r We are also to confess our neglecting to comply with the calls and invitations of the gospel. On account of this neglect, we are said to 'receive the grace of God in vain;'^s or 'not to know the time of our visitation.'^t On account of it likewise, when God has 'called, we have refused;' when he has 'stretched out his hand, no man regarded, but we have set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof.'^u We are also to confess our neglect of public and secret duties, or our worshipping God in a careless indifferent manner. Thus the prophet represents the people as saying, 'Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye have brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; should I accept this at your hands?'^x We are also to confess our neglect of relative duties, in not instructing those under our care, nor reproving them for sin committed, nor sympathizing with the afflicted, nor warning those who are going out of God's way. By these means a multitude

¹ Prov. xxviii. 13.

^p Rom. vii. 19.

^t Luke xix. 44.

^m Rom. vii. 18.

^q Job xiii. 26.

^u Prov. i. 24, 25.

ⁿ Lev. xiii. 45.

^r Jer. viii. 7.

^x Mal. i. 13.

^o Isa. i. 6.

^s 2 Cor. vi. 1.

of sins might have been prevented ; and, through our neglecting to use them, many persons have been ruined.

Sins of commission, which are also to be confessed, are such as were committed either before or after our conversion to God. The former involve a disowning of his authority, or of his right to obedience ; the latter, an ungrateful disregard to or forgetfulness of the greatest benefits received from him. We are also to confess those sins which are contrary to the moral law, or the very light of nature ; which we are often guilty of. And, that we may be furnished with matter and give scope to our thoughts and affections in confessing them, it may be of use for us to consider the sins forbidden under each of the ten commandments, which have been before particularly insisted on. We ought also to confess the various aggravations of sin. To assist us in doing this, those things which are stated in a former Answer,^y respecting the aggravations of sin, may be of some use to us ; especially if we make a particular application of them to our own case, and observe how far we have reason to fall under a sense of guilt, or charge ourselves with such crimes as those which are there mentioned. Moreover, we are to confess the sins we have committed against the engagements or grace of the gospel ; the low thoughts we have sometimes had of the person of Christ, his love to us, or the benefits we have been made partakers of from him, while we have been ready to say, as the daughters of Jerusalem are represented as doing, ‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved?’^z how much we have hardened our hearts against him, refusing to submit to his yoke or bear his cross ; how often we have been ashamed of his cause and interest, especially when called to suffer reproach for it. Have we not sometimes questioned the truth of his promises, refused to submit to his righteousness, and to depend upon it alone for justification ; while we have had too high thoughts of ourselves, glorying and valuing ourselves upon the performance of some moral duties which we have put in the room of Christ ? We ought likewise to confess how much we have opposed him in all his offices. We have not depended on him as a prophet, to lead us in the way of truth and peace, but have leaned to our own understanding, and therefore have been left to pervert, disbelieve, or, at least, entertain some doubts about, the great doctrines of the gospel ; or, if our minds have been rightly informed as to these doctrines, we have not made a practical improvement of them for our spiritual advantage. Have we not opposed him as a priest, neglecting to set a due value on the atonement he has made for sin, and not improving his intercession for us, who is entered into the holy place made without hands, to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace ? Have we not also refused to submit to him as King of saints, or to seek protection from him against the assaults of our spiritual enemies ? These things are to be confessed by us in prayer ; and we are to confess them with such a sense of our own guilt, that we acknowledge ourselves to be, as the apostle says concerning himself, ‘the chief of sinners.’^a

I am sensible many will be ready to conclude, that much of what has been said concerning sins to be confessed is applicable to none but those who are in a state of unregeneracy ; that among these, few can say that they are the chief of sinners, unless they have been notoriously vile and scandalous in the eye of the world ; and that the apostle Paul, when he says this respecting himself, has a peculiar reference to what he was before his conversion. We reply, that it is impossible we should know so much of the sins of others, together with their respective aggravations, as we may of those which have been committed by ourselves. And if we have not been left to commit those gross and scandalous sins which we have beheld in others with abhorrence, our not having committed them is owing, not to ourselves, but to the grace of God, by which we are what we are. For, had we been destitute of that grace, we should have been as bad as the worst of men ; and if our hearts have been renewed and changed by it, so that we are kept from committing those sins which are inconsistent with a state of grace ; yet there are very heinous aggravations attending such as we have reason to charge ourselves with ; whereby we have acted contrary to the experience we have had of the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, and have been guilty of very great ingratitude against

y See Quest. cli.

z Cant. v. 9.

a 1 Tim. i. 15.

him who has laid us under the highest obligations. Thus concerning confession of sin, when drawing nigh to God in the duty of prayer.

II. We are now to consider another part of prayer, namely, that we are therein thankfully to acknowledge the mercies of God. Thus the psalmist says, 'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.'^b And elsewhere, 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord;'^c that is, I will join prayer and praise together. Nothing is more obvious than that favours received ought to be acknowledged; otherwise we are guilty of that ingratitude which is one of the vilest crimes. Not to acknowledge what we receive from God, is, in effect, to deny our obligation to him; and to do this will provoke him to withhold from us those other mercies which we stand in need of.

This duty ought to be performed at all times, and on all occasions. Thus the apostle says, 'In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.'^d That thanksgiving is due in all circumstances, is evident from the fact that there is no condition of life but what has in it some mixture of mercy. The mercies we receive from God, are either outward or spiritual, common or special. The former he gives to all without distinction; as it is said, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;'^e and, 'He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,'^f and 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'^g The latter sort of mercies he bestows on the heirs of salvation, in a covenant way, as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and a pledge of farther blessings which he has reserved in store for them. There are mercies which we have in hand or in possession, and others which we have in hope or in reversion. Thus the apostle speaks of the 'hope' which is 'laid up for' the saints 'in heaven,'^h which he thanks God for in his prayer for the church. Again, the mercies of God may be considered as either personal or relative. The former we are more immediately the subjects of; the latter affect us so far as we stand related to others, for whose welfare we are greatly concerned, and whose happiness makes a very considerable addition to our own.

1. We are to express our thankfulness to God for personal mercies. Accordingly, we are to bless him for the advantages of nature, which are the effects of divine goodness. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'ⁱ Though the human nature falls very short of what it was at first, when the image of God was perfectly stamped on all the powers and faculties of the soul; and though it is not what it shall be when brought to a state of perfection in heaven; yet there are many natural endowments which we have received from God, as a means for our glorifying him, and answering the end of our being in the whole conduct of our lives.

We have, in every age of life, received the blessings of providence. We have great reason to be thankful, if, in our childhood and youth we had the invaluable blessing of a religious education, and were kept or delivered from the pernicious influence of bad examples, whence that age of life often receives such a tincture as tends to vitiate the soul, and to open the way for all manner of sin, which will afterwards insinuate itself into all its powers and faculties, and prevail, like an infectious distemper, over them. What reason have we to bless God if we have been favoured with restraining or preventing grace, whereby we have been kept from youthful lusts which are destructive to multitudes, and lay a foundation for their future ruin; and especially if it has pleased God to bring us under early convictions of sin, so that we have experienced in our youth the hopeful beginnings of a work of grace, which is an effect of more than common providence! We ought to take notice, with great thankfulness, of the methods of divine grace, if we have been early led into the knowledge of the first principles of the oracles of God; especially if they have made such an impression on our hearts that we can say, with good Obadiah, 'I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.'^k Again, we are to express our thankful-

b Psal. c. 4.

c Psal. cxvi. 17.

d Phil. iv. 6.

e Psal. cxlv. 9.

f Luke vi. 35.

g Matt. v. 45.

h Col. i. 3, 5.

i Psal. cxxxix. 14.

k 1 Kings xviii. 12.

ness for the mercies which we have received in our advanced age, when arrived at a state of manhood. Accordingly, we are to bless God for directing and ordering our settlement in the world, in those things more especially which relate to our secular callings and employments; and for the advantages of suitable society in those families in which our lot has been cast, as well as the many instances of divine goodness in our own. We ought also to bless him for giving success to our industry and endeavours used to promote our comfort and happiness in the world, together with that degree of usefulness which it has pleased God to favour us with in these. We ought also to bless him for carrying us through many difficulties which lay in our way; some of which we have been almost ready to think insurmountable. We ought likewise to bless him for bringing us under the means of grace; particularly if we were not favoured with a religious education in our childhood; and more especially, if these means have been made effectual to answer the highest and most valuable ends. Again, there are other mercies which some have reason to bless God for who have arrived at old age; which is the last stage of life, wherein the frame of nature is declining and hastening apace to a dissolution. These, I say, have reason to be thankful, if they have not, as it were, outlived themselves, wholly lost their memory and judgment, by which means they would have been brought back, as it were, to the state of childhood, as some have been. They have reason for thankfulness also, if old age be not pressed down beyond measure with pain and bodily diseases, or with a multitude of cares and troubles about outward circumstances in the world. For such troubles would tend to imbitter the small remains of life, which has not much strength of nature to bear up under great trials, and does not admit of those methods being made use of, whereby others, without much difficulty, are able to extricate themselves out of them. But they, of all others, have most reason to bless God, who can look back on a long series of usefulness, in proportion to the number of years they have lived; so that that promise is fulfilled to them, 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.'¹ This is more than a common mercy, and therefore requires a greater degree of thankfulness. For then it may be said of them, 'The hoary head is a crown of glory,' being 'found in the way of righteousness;'^m and grace keeps equal pace with age, and they have nothing to do but to wait for a release from a careful, vain, uneasy life to heaven. Thus concerning the occasions we have for thankfulness in every age of life.

We are now to consider the reason that we have to be thankful in the various circumstances or conditions of life. In particular, we are to be thankful when we have a great measure of outward prosperity. This is more than many enjoy, and calls for a proportionable degree of thankfulness; especially if it be sanctified and sweetened with a sense of God's special love, so that it is a pledge and earnest of better things reserved for us hereafter,—when we have the good things of this life for our conveniency, that our passage through the world may be more easy and comfortable to us, and yet we have ground to hope that these are not our portion, or that we are not like those whom the psalmist speaks of, and calls 'the men of the world,' 'who have their portion in this life,'ⁿ or, like the rich man in the parable, to whom it was said, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.'^o We have reason to bless God when outward prosperity is a means of our glorifying him, and being more serviceable to promote his interest, and not a snare or occasion of sin; when it is not like 'the prosperity of fools,' which has a tendency to 'destroy them';^p when what is said concerning that murmuring generation of men, whom the psalmist speaks of, who 'lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert,' so that though 'he gave them their request, he sent leanness into their soul,' is not applicable to us;^q when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, and, at the same time, live above them, so that our hearts are not too much set upon them, but we are willing to part with them, when God is about to deprive us of them or take us from them; and when outward enjoyments are helps, and not hinderances, to us in our way to heaven.

1 Psal. xcii. 14.
p Prov. i. 32.

m Prov. xvi. 31.
p Psal. cvi. 14, 15.

n Psal. xvii. 14.

o Luke xvi. 25.

These are inducements to the greatest thankfulness, and ought to be acknowledged to the glory of God. Again, we have reason to be thankful, though it pleases God to follow us with many afflictions and adverse providences in the world. These are not, indeed, to be reckoned blessings in themselves. Yet they are not inconsistent with a thankful frame of spirit; especially when we take occasion from them to be affected with the vanity, emptiness, and uncertainty of all outward comforts, which perish in the using; or when they have a tendency to humble us and make us submissive to the divine will, so that we are led to have a deep sense of sin, the procuring cause of them. Thus Ephraim speaks of his being 'chastised' by God, and, at the same time, 'ashamed' and 'confounded,' as 'bearing the reproach' of former sins committed by him.^r We have also reason to be thankful under afflictions when those sins which formerly prevailed, are hereby prevented, and we are enabled to mortify them. Thus the psalmist says, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.'^s We should likewise be thankful for afflictions when God is pleased to cause his grace to abound as outward troubles abound;^t and when the want of outward mercies makes us to see the worth of them, and puts us upon improving every instance of the divine goodness as a great inducement to thankfulness. Moreover, we have reason to be thankful under afflictions, when we have a comfortable hope that they are evidences of our being God's children, interested in his special love;^u so that we have ground to conclude that he is hereby training us up and making us more meet for the heavenly inheritance, and we can say with the apostle, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'^x

2. We are to express our thankfulness for those mercies which we call relative, or for the blessings which others enjoy in whose welfare we are more immediately concerned. As it is the duty of every one to desire the good of all men; so we ought to bless God for the mercies bestowed on others as well as on ourselves. The relation we stand in to others, is, in one respect, general or extensive, and includes all mankind. Accordingly, we are to be thankful for the mercies which our fellow-creatures receive from the hand of God, inasmuch as, by the bestowal of them, the divine perfections are magnified. The ends of Christ's death, and the dispensation of the gospel, are attained in the case of those who receive the blessings which accompany salvation; and whatever mercies God bestows on others, we bless him for them, taking encouragement to hope that he will bestow the same blessings upon us, when we stand in need of them. As for those who are related to us in the bonds of nature, or as members of the family to which we belong, for whose welfare we are more immediately concerned, we may, in some measure, reckon the mercies they enjoy our own. We hence should be induced to bless God and be thankful for them, as well as for those which we receive in our own persons. There is also another relation, which is more large and extensive, namely, that which we stand in to all the members of Christ's mystical body, whom the apostle calls 'the household of faith,'^y and whom, as such, he supposes to be entitled to our more special regard. Accordingly, we are to express our thankfulness to God, in prayer, for all the mercies they receive, especially those which are of a spiritual nature. For in the bestowal of these, Christ is glorified, and his interest advanced; which ought to be dearer to us than any thing which relates to our own private or personal interest, as the psalmist speaks of his preferring Jerusalem's welfare above his 'chief joy.'^z We are likewise to be thankful for the bestowal of spiritual blessings on believers, because we hope that we shall be made partakers of the same blessings, whereby others will have occasion to bless God on our behalf. Thus concerning the inducements we have to thankfulness for blessings received, either by ourselves or others.

I shall conclude this Head by considering that thankfulness, which ought to be a great ingredient in prayer, is always to be accompanied with the exercise of those graces whereby we are disposed to adore and magnify the divine perfections which are displayed in the distribution of those favours which we bless God for; together with a humble sense of our own unworthiness of the least of those mer-

^r Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.
^x 2 Cor. iv. 17.

^s Psal. cxix. 67.
^y Gal. vi. 10.

^t 2 Cor. iv. 16.
^z Psal. cxxxvii. 6.

^u Heb. xii. 7.

cies which we enjoy, and an earnest desire that we may be enabled, not only to make a confession of our unworthiness in words, but to express our thankfulness to him by such a frame of spirit as is agreeable to our feeling ourselves unworthy.

There are two things more, contained in the Answer we have been explaining, without the due consideration of which, the duty of prayer would be very imperfectly handled, namely, its being an offering up of our desires to God, in the name of Christ, and by the help of the Spirit. But as these subjects are particularly insisted on in some following Answers, I purposely waive the consideration of them at present.

TO WHOM AND IN WHOSE NAME PRAYER IS MADE.

QUESTION CLXXIX. *Are we to pray unto God only?*

ANSWER. God only being able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of all, and only to be believed in, and worshipped with religious worship; prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

QUESTION CLXXX. *What is it to pray in the name of Christ?*

ANSWER. To pray in the name of Christ, is, in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake, not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

QUESTION CLXXXI. *Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?*

ANSWER. The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great as that we can have no access into his presence without a Mediator; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for that glorious work, but Christ alone; we are to pray in no other name but his only.

In these Answers we have a farther explanation of what is briefly laid down in the last; more especially, as to the object of prayer, and the method prescribed in the gospel, relating to our drawing nigh to God, through a Mediator, which is called praying in the name of Christ; together with the reason of this.

Prayer is to be made to God only.

It is observed that prayer is to be made to God only, and to none other. This appears from various considerations.

1. Prayer is to be made to God only, because it is an act of religious worship, which is due to none but God. Thus our Saviour says, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'^a That God only is to be worshipped can be denied by none who are, in any measure, acquainted with either natural or revealed religion. For in worship, we are obliged to extol, adore, and admire those divine perfections which are displayed in the works of nature or grace, and to seek from God that help and those supplies of grace which we stand in need of to make us completely blessed; which supposes him to be infinitely perfect, and all-sufficient. Now, to ascribe this divine glory to a creature, either directly, or by consequence, is, in effect, to say that he is equal with God, and to rob God of that glory which is due to him alone; and to seek that from the creature which none but God can give, or to ascribe any of the perfections of the divine nature to it, is the highest affront that can be offered to the divine Majesty. Now, as prayer without adoration and invocation, is destitute of those ingredients which render it an act of religious worship; so to address ourselves in prayer to any one but God, is an instance of such profaneness and idolatry as is not to be mentioned without the greatest detestation.

2. Prayer is to be made to God only, because he only is able to search the heart; which is a glory peculiar to himself, in which he is distinguished from all

^a Matt. iv. 10.

creatures.^b It is the heart which is principally to be regarded in prayer. If this be not right with God, no glory which we can ascribe to him will be reckoned any better than 'flattering him with our mouth,' and 'lying to him with our tongues.'^c Hence, the inward frame of our spirit, and the principle or spring whence all religious duties proceed, being known only to God, prayer is to be directed only to him.

3. He alone can hear our requests, pardon our sins, and fulfil our desires. Prayer, when addressed to God, is not like that in which we desire favours from men. These favours are of a lower nature, whereby some particular wants are supplied, in those respects in which one creature may be of advantage to another. But when we pray to God, we seek blessings which are the effects of infinite power and goodness, such as may make us completely happy, both in this and in a better world. Moreover, we are to implore forgiveness of sin from God in prayer. Now, this is a blessing which none can bestow but God.^d For as his law is the rule by which the goodness or badness of actions is determined; and as the threatening which he has annexed to it, is that which renders us liable to the punishment which sin deserves; so it is he alone who can remit the debt of punishment to which we were liable, and give us a right and title to forfeited blessings. Hence, as this forgiveness is the principal thing which we are to seek for in prayer, none but God is the object of prayer.

4. God alone is to be believed in. Accordingly, prayer, if it be acceptable to him, must be performed by faith. Thus the apostle says, 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?'^e There must be a firm persuasion that he can grant us the blessings we ask for; faith addresses itself to him as God all-sufficient, and is persuaded that he will fulfil all his promises, as a God of infinite faithfulness; and accordingly we are to give ourselves up entirely to him as our proprietor and bountiful benefactor, the only fountain of blessedness, and object of religious worship. This is to be done by faith in prayer; and, consequently, prayer is to be directed to God only.

Prayer is to be made in the Name of Christ.

We are now to consider what it is to pray in the name of Christ. This does not consist merely in mentioning his name; which many do when they ask for favours for his sake, without a due regard to the method God has ordained. For, according to that method we are to draw nigh to him by Christ our great Mediator, who is to be glorified as the person by whom we are to have access to God the Father, as the fountain of all the blessings which are communicated to us in this method of divine grace. To come to God in Christ's name, includes the whole work of faith, as to what it has to plead with, or what it has to hope for from him, through a Mediator, in that way which he has prescribed to us in the gospel. It more especially consists in our making a right use of what Christ has done and suffered for us, as the foundation of our hope, that God will be pleased to grant us what he has purchased thereby; which contains the sum of all that we can desire, when drawing nigh to him in prayer.

Here let it be considered, that the thoughts of having to do with an absolute God cannot but fill us with the utmost distress and confusion, when we consider ourselves as guilty sinners, and God, out of Christ, as a sin-revenging Judge, a consuming fire.^f Thinking thus of God, we may well say, as our first parent did immediately after his fall, 'I heard thy voice, and I was afraid.'^g Again, God is obliged in honour, as a God of infinite holiness, to separate and banish sinners from his comfortable presence, they being liable to the curse and condemning sentence of the law; by reason of which his terror makes them afraid, and his dread falls upon them. They have, however, in the gospel, not only an invitation to come, but a discovery of that great Mediator whom God has ordained to conduct his people into his presence, and who has procured liberty of access to him, or as the

^b 1 Kings viii. 39; Acts i. 24.
^e Rom. x. 14.

^c Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37.
^f Heb. xii. 29.

^d Mark ii. 7.
^g Gen. iii. 10.

apostle expresses it, 'boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.'^h God has, for this end, erected a throne of grace, and encouraged us to come to it, and given many great and precious promises, whereby we may hope for acceptance in his sight. Now, these promises being all established in Christ, and the blessings contained in them having been procured by his blood, and we having liberty, in coming, to plead what he has done and suffered, as what was designed to be the foundation of our hope of obtaining mercy, we are said to come and make our supplications to God in the name of Christ.

Why Prayer is to be made in the Name of Christ.

We are now to consider the reason why we are to pray in the name of Christ. This is stated in one of the Answers we are explaining. There it is observed that man, by sin, is set at such a distance from God, that he cannot, by any means, come into his presence. God cannot look upon him with any delight or complacency, inasmuch as his guilt renders him the object of his abhorrence; and he cannot do any thing which has a tendency to reconcile God to him, and therefore is speechless, and can ask for no blessing at his hand. It is farther observed that there is none in heaven or earth, that is, no mere creature, who is fit for that glorious work of mediation. None has a sufficiency of merit to present to God, whereby he may be said to make atonement for sin; or as Job expresses it, there is 'no days-man that might lay his hand on both parties,'ⁱ that is, no one who is able to deal with God in paying a ransom which he may in honour accept, or with man, by encouraging him to hope that he shall obtain the blessings which he stands in need of, and by bringing him into such a frame that he might draw nigh to God in a right manner. This work is owing only to our Lord Jesus Christ; and he does it as our great Mediator, who alone is fit to manage it. Hence, we are to pray to God, only in his name who is, by divine appointment, an advocate with the Father, pleading our cause before his throne, and so giving us ground of encouragement that our persons shall be accepted and our prayers answered on his account, who is the only Mediator of redemption and intercession, in whom God is well-pleased, and gives a believer ground to conclude that he shall not seek his face in vain.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP IN PRAYER.

QUESTION CLXXXII. *How doth the Spirit help us to pray?*

ANSWER. We not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made, and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

THERE is no duty which we can perform in a right manner, without help obtained from God. This is particularly true concerning the duty of prayer. Accordingly, we are led to speak of the help which the Spirit of God is pleased to afford believers, in order to their engaging aright in this duty.

Prayer cannot be made without the Spirit's Help.

Here it is supposed that we know not what to pray for as we ought, or how to bring our souls into a prepared frame for this duty, without the Spirit's assistance.

1. We are often at a loss with respect to the matter of prayer. Our being so may be said to proceed from our want of acquaintance with ourselves, and our not being duly sensible of our wants, weaknesses, or secret faults. Sometimes we can-

not determine whether we are in a state of grace or not ; or, if we are, whether it is increasing or declining. Or, if we have ground to complain by reason of the hidings of God's face, and our want of communion with him, we are often hard put to it to find out what the secret sin is which is the occasion of it ; nor are we sufficiently apprized of the wiles of Satan, or the danger we are in of being ensnared, or overcome by them. Moreover, we are often not able to know how to direct our prayers to God aright, as we know not what is most conducive to his glory, or what it is that he requires of us, either in obedience to his commanding will, or in submission to his providential will. Hence it arises that many good men, in scripture, asked for some things which were in themselves unlawful, through the weakness of their faith, and the prevalency of their corruption. Thus some desired that God would call them out of this world by death, being impatient under the many troubles they met with. Elijah, for example, ' requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers.'^k Job says, ' O that I might have my request ! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for ! even that it would please God to destroy me ; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off.'^l Jonah says, ' O Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live.'^m Moses, though he had the character of the meekest man upon earth, and doubtless excelled all others in his day in those graces which he had received from God, as well as in the great honours conferred on him, yet put up a most unbecoming prayer, both as to the matter and the manner of it ; for he said unto the Lord, ' Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant ? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me ? Have I conceived all this people ? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers ? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people ? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight ; and let me not see my wretchedness.'ⁿ In another instance, he asks for a thing which he knew beforehand God would not grant him, when he says, ' I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' On this occasion, God says, ' Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter.'^o Many instances of a similar nature are mentioned in scripture. Indeed, nothing is more obvious from daily experience, than what the apostle James observes, that persons ' ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss ;'^p or what the apostle Paul says, ' We know not what we should pray for, as we ought.'^q

2. We are at other times straitened in our affections, and so know not how to ask any thing with a suitable frame of spirit. It is certain we cannot, when we please, excite our affections, or especially put forth those graces which are to be exercised in prayer. Our hearts are sometimes dead, cold, and inclined to wander from God in this duty ; and, at other times, we pray with a kind of indifference, as though it were of no great importance whether our prayer were answered or not. How seldom do we express that importunity in this duty which Jacob did, ' I will not let thee go except thou bless me !'^r As for those graces which are to be exercised in prayer, we often want that reverence and those high and awful thoughts of the divine Majesty which we ought to have, who draw nigh to a God of infinite perfection ; nor, on the other hand, do we express those low and humble thoughts of ourselves which our own meanness, the imperfection of our best performances, and the infinite distance which we stand at from God, ought to suggest. We may add, that we are often destitute of that love to Christ, and that trust in him, which are necessary to the right performance of this duty, and also of that hope of being heard which is a very great encouragement to it.

k 1 Kings xix. 4.
o Deut. iii. 25, 26.

l Job vi. 8, 9.
p James iv. 3.

m Jonah iv. 3.
q Rom. viii. 26.

n Numb. xi. 11—15.
r Gen. xxxii. 26.

In what the Spirit's Help in Prayer consists.

We are now to inquire wherein the Spirit is said to help our infirmities. His help may be considered as adapted to the twofold necessity which we are often under, respecting the matter of prayer, or the frame of spirit with which the duty is to be performed.

1. The Spirit helps our infirmities, with respect to the matter of prayer. It is not in the least derogatory to his divine glory, that he is pleased to condescend thus to converse with man. Nor is it contrary to the nature of things; for the Spirit, being a divine person, searches the heart, and can, with as much facility as any one can convey his ideas to another by words, impress those ideas on the souls of his people, by which they may be led into the knowledge of the things which they ought to ask in prayer. If it were impossible for God to do this, his providence could not be conversant about intelligent creatures, any otherwise than in an objective way, and so it would not differ from that which may be attributed to finite spirits. Besides, it would have been impossible for God to have imparted his will by extraordinary revelation,—without which, it could not have been known; if he may not, though in an ordinary way, communicate to the souls of his people those ideas by which they may be furnished with matter for prayer. I am not pleading for extraordinary revelation, that being a blessing which God does not now give to his people. I only argue from the greater to the less,—that it is not impossible or absurd, from the nature of the thing, or contrary to the divine perfections, for God to impress the thoughts of men in an ordinary way; since he formerly did this in an extraordinary way, as will be allowed by all who are not disposed to deny and set aside revealed religion. Moreover, there was such a thing in the apostle's days as being led by the Spirit, which was distinguished from his miraculous and extraordinary influences, as a Spirit of inspiration; otherwise, it is certain, the apostle would not, as he does,^s have assigned a being led by the Spirit as a character of the children of God. And when our Saviour promises his people 'the Spirit to guide them into all truth,'^t I cannot think that the guidance promised respected only the apostles, or their being led into the truths which they were to impart to the church by divine inspiration; but it seems to be a privilege which belongs to all believers. We conclude, therefore, that it is no absurdity to suppose that the Holy Spirit may assist his people, as to what concerns the matter of their prayers, or suggest to them those becoming thoughts which they have in prayer, when drawing nigh to God in a right manner.

Some have inquired whether we may conclude that the Spirit of God furnishes his people with words in prayer, distinct from his impressing ideas on their minds. This I would be very cautious in determining, lest I should not put a just difference between the assistance of the Spirit which believers hope for, and that which the prophets of old received by inspiration. I dare not say that the Spirit's work consists in furnishing believers with proper expressions, with which their ideas are clothed, when they engage in this duty: I would rather say that it consists in furnishing them with those suitable arguments and apprehensions of divine things which are more immediately subservient to prayer. Accordingly the apostle, speaking of the Spirit's assisting believers, when they know not what to pray for as they ought, says, that the Spirit assists them 'with groanings that cannot be uttered;' that is, he impresses on their souls those divine breathings after things spiritual and heavenly which they sometimes, notwithstanding, want words to express; though, at the same time, the frame of their spirits may be under a divine influence, which God is said to know the meaning of, when he graciously hears and answers their prayers, how imperfect soever these may be as to the mode of expression.

2. The Spirit helps our infirmities by giving us a suitable frame of spirit, and exciting those graces which are to be exercised in this duty of prayer. This the psalmist calls, 'preparing their hearts.' God does this, and then 'causes his ear to hear.'^u In order to our understanding aright this desirable blessing, let it be considered that

^s Rom. viii. 14.^t John xvi. 13.^u Psal. x. 17.

we cannot, without the Spirit's assistance, bring our hearts into a right frame for prayer. Our inability to do so is the reason why we engage in this duty in such a manner as gives great uneasiness to us when we reflect upon it. Hence, when we pretend to draw nigh to God, we can hardly say that we worship him as God, but we become vain in our imaginations; and the corruption of our nature discovers itself more at this time than it does on other occasions; and Satan uses his utmost endeavours to distract and disturb our thoughts, and take off the edge of our affections, so that we seem not really to desire those things which with our lips we ask at the hand of God. As for an unregenerate man, he has not a principle of grace, and therefore cannot pray in faith, or with the exercise of other graces, which he is destitute of. Even the believer is renewed but in part; and therefore, if the Spirit is not pleased to excite the principle of grace which he has implanted, he is very much indisposed for this duty, which cannot be performed aright without the Spirit's assistance. We are, nevertheless, to use our utmost endeavours, in order to prayer, hoping for a blessing from God to make them successful. We are to meditate on the divine perfections, and the evil of sin, which is contrary to them, and by which we are rendered guilty, defiled, and unworthy to come into the presence of God. Yet we are to consider ourselves as invited to come to him in the gospel, and as encouraged by his promise and grace to cast ourselves before his footstool, in hope of obtaining mercy from him. We are also to examine ourselves, that we may know what sins are to be confessed by us, what those necessities are which will afford matter for petition or supplication in prayer, and what mercies we have received, which are to be thankfully acknowledged. We are also to consider the many encouragements which we have to draw nigh to God in this duty, from his being ready to pardon our iniquities, heal our backslidings, help our infirmities, and grant us undeserved favours. We must also impress on our souls a due sense of the spirituality of the duty we are to engage in, and of our having to do with the heart-searching God, who will be worshipped with reverence and holy fear. We are therefore to endeavour to excite all the powers and faculties of our souls, to engage in this duty in such a way that we may glorify his name, and hope to receive a gracious answer.

But when we have used our utmost endeavours to bring ourselves into a praying frame, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to give success to them, that we may be enabled to exercise those graces which are more especially his gift and work. We must give glory to him as the author of regeneration; since no grace can be exercised in this duty but what proceeds from a right principle, or a nature renewed, and internally sanctified, and disposed for the performance of it; which is his work, as 'the Spirit of grace and of supplications.'^x—Again, as we are, if we hope to be accepted by him, to draw nigh to God in this duty as a reconciled God and Father; so we are to consider that our being enabled to do this is the peculiar work of the Spirit, whereby we 'cry, Abba, Father.'^y This will not only dispose us to perform the duty in a right manner, so as to enable us to pray in faith; but it will afford us ground of hope that our prayers will be heard and answered.—Further, as we often are straitened in our spirits, and so are greatly hindered in prayer, we must consider it as a peculiar blessing and gift of the Holy Ghost to have our hearts enlarged. This the psalmist intends when he says, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name;'^z and it is a peculiar branch of that liberty which God is pleased to bestow on his people, under the gospel dispensation. Thus the apostle says, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'^a By this means our affections will be raised, and we shall be enabled to pour out our souls before God.

Raised Affections in Prayer.

We may here take occasion to inquire concerning the difference which there is between raised affections in prayer, which unregenerate persons sometimes have from external motives, and those which the Spirit excites in us as a peculiar bless-

x Zech. xii. 10.

y Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6.

z Psal. cxlii. 7.

a 2 Cor. iii. 17.

ing, whereby he assists us in the discharge of this duty. There are several things in which they differ. The former often proceed from a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of God; the latter from a love to him, and desire after him, which arises from the view we have of his glory, as our covenant God, in and through a Mediator. Again, raised affections in unregenerate persons, are seldom found except when they are under some pressing affliction. In this case, as the prophet says, 'they will seek God early;'^b but when the affliction is removed, the affections grow stupid, cold, and indifferent, as they were before. On the other hand, a believer will find his heart drawn forth after God and divine things, when he is not sensible of any extraordinary affliction which excites his passions; or he finds that, as afflictions tend to excite some graces in the exercise of which his affections are moved, so when it pleases God to deliver him from them, his affections are still raised while other graces are exercised agreeably to them. Further, raised affections, in unregenerate men, for the most part, carry them forth in the pursuit of those temporal blessings which they stand in need of. Thus when Esau sought the blessing carefully with tears, it was the outward prosperity contained in it which he had principally in view. He disdained that his brother Jacob should be preferred before him, or, as it is said, 'made his lord, and his brethren given him for servants;'^c but he had no regard to the spiritual or saving blessings which were contained in the birthright. A believer, on the contrary, is most concerned for and affected with those blessings which more immediately accompany salvation, or which include the special love of God, or communion with him, which he prefers to all other things. Thus the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'^d We may add, that whatever raised affections unregenerate persons may have, they want a broken heart, an humble sense of sin, and an earnest desire that it may be subdued and mortified. They are destitute of self-denial, and other graces of a similar nature, which, in some degree, are found in a believer, when assisted by the Spirit, in performing the duty of prayer in a right manner.

Practical Inferences from the Spirit's Help in Prayer.

From what has been said concerning the Spirit's assistance in prayer, several inferences may be drawn. First, there is a great difference between the gift and the grace of prayer. The former may be attained by the improvement of our natural abilities, and is often of use to others who join with us; while the latter is a peculiar blessing from the Spirit of God, and an evidence of the truth of grace. Again, they who deny that the Spirit has any hand in the work of grace, and consequently disown his assistance in prayer, cannot be said to give him that glory which is due to him, and therefore must be supposed to be destitute of his assistance, and very deficient as to this duty. Again, let us not presume on the Spirit's assistance in prayer, while we continue in a course of grieving him, and quenching his holy motions. Further, let us desire raised affections, as a great blessing from God, and yet not be discouraged from engaging in prayer though we want them; since this grace, as well as all others, is dispensed in a way of sovereignty. And if he is pleased, for wise ends, to withhold his assistance; yet we must not say, why should I wait on the Lord any longer? Finally, if we would pray in the Spirit, or experience his help to perform this duty in a right manner, let us endeavour to walk in the Spirit, and to maintain at all times a spiritual, holy, self-denying frame.

^b Hos. v. 15.

^c Gen. xxvii. 37.

^d Psal. iv. 6.

FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT PRAYER IS TO BE MADE.

QUESTION CLXXXIII. *For whom are we to pray?*

ANSWER. We are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth, for magistrates and ministers, for ourselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death.

QUESTION CLXXXIV. *For what things are we to pray?*

ANSWER. We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God, the welfare of the church, our own or others' good, but not for any thing that is unlawful.

THE former of these Answers notices the persons for whom we are to pray; and, on the other hand, the persons who are not to be prayed for.

For whom Prayer is to be made.

1. We are to pray for the whole church of Christ on earth. By this church we are to understand all those who profess the faith of the gospel, especially those whose practice is agreeable to their profession; and, in particular, all those religious societies who consent to walk in those ordinances whereby they testify their subjection to Christ as King of saints. The particular members of which these societies consist, are, for the most part, unknown to us; so that we cannot pray for them by name, or as being acquainted with the condition and circumstances in which they are; yet they are not to be wholly disregarded, or excluded from the benefit of our prayers. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the great conflict he had,' not only 'for them at Laodicea, but for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh.'^e

Prayer for all Christians is a peculiar branch of the communion of saints; and it is accompanied with earnest desires that God may be glorified in them and by them, as well as in and by ourselves. In particular, we are to pray that they may be united together in love to God and to one another;^f and that their union may be attended with all those other graces and comforts which are an evidence of their interest in Christ. We are to pray that they may have the special presence of God with them in all his ordinances; which will be a visible testimony of his regard to them, and an honour put on his own institutions, as well as an accomplishment of what he promised to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven, that he would 'be with them always, even unto the end of the world.'^g We are to pray that they may be supported under the burdens, difficulties, and persecutions which they meet with, either from the powers of darkness, or from wicked men, for Christ's sake; that so the promise may be made good to them, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.'^h We are to pray that many may be added to particular churches out of the world, such as shall be saved;ⁱ which will be an evidence of the success of the gospel. And when we pray that God would magnify his grace in bringing sinners home to himself, we are to pray for the accomplishment of those promises which respect the conversion of the Jews. Thus the apostle says, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.'^k We are to pray also that there may be a greater spread of the gospel throughout the most remote and dark parts of the earth, among whom Christ is at present unknown. This diffusion of the gospel the apostle calls 'The fulness of the Gentiles coming in;'^l and it is agreeable to the prediction in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, which seems not as yet to have had its full accomplishment. Again, we are to pray that the life of faith and holiness may be daily promoted in all the faithful members of the church of Christ, that they may be enabled more and more to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and be abundantly satisfied and delighted with the fruits and effects of his redeeming love. We are to pray that God would accept those sacrifices of prayer and praise which are daily offered to him by faith in the blood of Christ, in every worshipping assembly, and which will redound to the advantage of

^e Col. ii. 1.
ⁱ Acts ii. 47.

^f John xvii. 21.
^k Rom. x. 1.

^g Matt. xxviii. 20.
^l Chap. xi. 25.

^h Chap. xvi. 18.

all the servants of Christ, of whom they think themselves obliged to make mention, as well as to the glory of God, which is owned and advanced by them. We are to pray that the children of believers, who are devoted to God, may be under his special care and protection, that they may follow the footsteps of the flock, and fill up the places of those who are called off the stage of this world; that so there may be a constant supply of those who shall bear a testimony to Christ and his gospel in the rising generation. Finally, we are to pray that the members of every particular church of Christ may so acquit themselves that they may honour him in the eyes of the world; that they may be supported and carried safely through this waste howling wilderness, till they arrive at that better country for which they are bound; and that they may not be foiled or overcome while they are in their militant state, till they shall be joined with the church triumphant in heaven.

2. We are to pray for magistrates. Not only is this duty included in the general exhortation given us to 'pray for all men;' but it is particularly mentioned by the apostle, and is intimated to be 'good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.'^m Besides, magistracy is God's ordinance;ⁿ and whatever ordinance is stamped with the divine authority, though it may principally respect civil affairs, we are to pray that God would bless and prosper it, that it may answer the valuable ends for which it was appointed.

Now, there are several things which we are to pray for in behalf of magistrates. We are to pray that they may approve themselves rulers after God's own heart, to 'fulfil all his will,'^o as was said of David; that their counsels and conduct may be ordered for his glory, and the good of his church; that they may be 'a terror,' not to 'good works,' that is, to persons who perform them, but 'to the evil,' and so 'may not bear the sword in vain.'^p We are to pray that they may be a public blessing to all their subjects, and so that promise be fulfilled, 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers';^q and, as an instance of this, that under them 'we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.'^r As to their subjects, we are to pray that they may not, on the one hand, abuse and trample on their authority, and take occasion to offend with impunity; nor, on the other hand, have cause to dread that authority as grievous, in instances of injustice and oppression.

3. We are to pray for ministers. This is a necessary duty, inasmuch as their work is exceedingly great and difficult; so that the apostle might well say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'^s Indeed, besides the difficulties which attend the work itself, there are others which they meet with, from the unstable temper of professed friends, who sometimes, as the apostle says, 'become their enemies for telling them the truth';^t or from the restless malice and violent opposition of open enemies, which evidently takes its rise from the inveterate hatred which they bear to Christ and his gospel. Moreover, as they have difficulties in the discharge of the work they are called to, so they must give an account to God for their faithfulness in it; and it is of the highest importance that they do this 'with joy, and not with grief.'^u So the apostle remarks; and immediately he entreats the church's prayers, as what was necessary in order to his giving such an account.

Now, there are several things which ought to be the subject of our prayers, with respect to ministers. We are to pray that God would send forth a supply or succession of them, to answer the church's necessities; inasmuch as 'the harvest is plentiful,' as our Saviour observes, 'but the labourers are few.'^x We are to pray that they may answer the character which the apostle gives of a faithful minister: and accordingly may 'study to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'^y We are to pray that they may be directed and enabled to impart those truths which are substantial, edifying, and suitable to the circumstances and condition of their hearers. We are to pray that they may be spirited with zeal and with love to souls, in the whole course of their ministry; that the glory of God, and the advancement of his truth may lie nearest

m 1 Tim. ii. 1—3.

q Isa. xlix. 23.

u Heb. xiii. 17, 18.

ii.

n Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

r 1 Tim. ii. 2.

x Matt. ix. 37, 38.

o Acts xiii. 22.

s 2 Cor. ii. 16.

v 2 Tim. ii. 15.

p Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

t Gal. iv. 16.

their hearts ; and that a tender concern and compassion for the souls of men may incline them to use their utmost endeavours, as the apostle says, to ‘ save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire.’^z We are to pray that their endeavours may be attended with success ; which, in some measure, may give them a comfortable hope that they are called, accepted, and approved of by God ; and which, from the nature of the thing, will tend to our own advantage, who make the bestowal of it the subject of our earnest prayers on their behalf. Indeed, the neglect of this duty may, in some measure, be assigned as one reason why the word is often preached with very little success. Hence the duty ought to be performed, not merely as an act of favour, but as a duty which redounds to our own advantage.

4. We are to pray, not only for ourselves and our brethren, but also for our enemies. That we are to pray for ourselves, none ever denied, how much soever many live in the neglect of this duty. As for our obligation to pray for our brethren, it is founded in the law of nature ; which obliges us to love them as ourselves, and, consequently, to desire their welfare, together with our own. It may be inquired, however, what we are to understand by our brethren, whom we are to express this great concern for, in our supplications to God ? For understanding this, let it be considered that, besides being applied to those who are brethren in the most known acceptation of the word, as Jacob’s sons tell Joseph, ‘ We be twelve brethren, sons of one father ;’^a the word ‘ brother’ is sometimes taken, in scripture, for any near kinsman. Thus Abraham and Lot are called brethren,^b though they were not sons of the same father ; for Lot was Abraham’s brother’s son.^c This is a very common acceptation of the word in scripture. Again, it is sometimes taken in a more large sense, for those who are members of the same church. Thus the apostle calls those who belonged to the church at Colosse, ‘ the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.’^d Sometimes, also, they who are of the same nation are called brethren. Thus it is said, ‘ When Moses was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.’^e It is likewise sometimes taken for those who make a profession of the same religion with ourselves ; and also for those who are kind and friendly to us. Thus it is said, ‘ A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.’^f Indeed, the word is sometimes taken in the largest sense that can be, as comprising all mankind, who have the same nature with ourselves.^g These are the objects of love ; and therefore our prayers are, especially in proportion to the nearness of the relation they stand in to us, to be directed to God on behalf of all. Some, indeed, are allied to us by stronger bonds than others ; but none, who are entitled to our love, pity, and compassion, are to be wholly excluded from our prayers.

This will farther appear, if we consider that we are to pray also for our enemies. The law of nature obliges us to do good for evil ; and consequently, as our Saviour says, we are to ‘ pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us.’^h We are not, indeed, to pray that they may obtain their wicked and unjust designs against us, or that they may have power and opportunity to hurt us ; for to do so would be contrary to the principle of self-preservation, which is impressed on our nature. But we are to pray that, however they act toward us, they may be made Christ’s friends, their hearts changed, and they enabled to serve his interest ; that they, together with ourselves, may be partakers of everlasting salvation. Hence, it is a vile thing, and altogether inconsistent with the spirit of a Christian, to desire the ruin, much more the damnation of any one, as many wickedly and profanely do. Again, we are to pray that their corruptions may be subdued, their tempers softened, and their hearts changed ; so that they may be sensible of their unjust resentments against us, and lay them aside. And if they are under any distress or misery, we are not to insult them, or take pleasure in beholding it ; but we are to pity them, and to pray for their deliverance, as much as though they were not enemies to us.

5. We are to pray, not only for all sorts of men now living, according to what is stated in the preceding Head, but for those who shall live hereafter. To pray

z Jude, ver. 23.
e Acts vii. 23.

a Gen. xlii. 32.
f Prov. xvii. 17.

b Chap. xiii. 8.
g 1 John iv. 21.

c Chap. xi. 31.
h Matt. v. 44.

d Col. i. 2.

thus includes an earnest desire that the interest of Christ may be propagated from generation to generation ; and that his kingdom and glory may be advanced in the world till his second coming. Thus the psalmist says, ' He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come ; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.'ⁱ And our Saviour says, ' Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.'^k

For whom Prayer is not to be made.

We are now to consider those who are excluded from our prayers. These are either such as are dead, or those who have sinned the sin unto death.

I. We are not to pray for the dead. This is asserted in opposition to an opinion which was maintained and practised by some in the early ages in the church, and which paved the way for those abuses and corruptions which are, at this day, practised by the church of Rome, who first prayed for the dead, and afterwards proceeded to pray to them. The first step leading to this error, seems to have been great excesses, on the part of some in the early ages of the church, in the encomiums they made, in their public anniversary orations, on the memory of the martyrs and confessors who had suffered in the cause of Christianity. This step was originally taken with a good design, namely, to excite those who survived to imitate the martyrs in their virtues, and to express their love to the cause for which they suffered. But afterwards they went beyond the bounds of decency in magnifying and extolling them ; and then proceeded yet farther, in praying for them. This practice of praying for the dead is often excused, by some modern writers, from the respect they bear to those who first observed it ; though it can hardly be vindicated from the charge of will-worship, since no countenance is given to it in scripture. What is generally alleged in behalf of the early Christians who prayed for the dead, is, that they supposed the souls of believers did not immediately enter heaven, but were sequestered or disposed of in some place inferior to it, sometimes called by them ' paradise ' or ' Abraham's bosom,' where they are to continue till their souls are reunited to their bodies. Whether this place were above or below the earth, all were not agreed. Their mistake arose from their misunderstanding those scriptures which describe heaven under the metaphorical characters of ' paradise ' or ' Abraham's bosom.'^l Here they supposed that departed believers are, indeed, delivered from the afflictions and miseries of this present life ; yet not possessed of perfect blessedness in God's immediate presence. They hence concluded that there was some room for prayer, that the degree of happiness which they were possessed of might be continued, or rather that it might, in the end, be perfected, when they are raised from the dead, and admitted to partake of the heavenly blessedness. Others thought that, at death, the sentence was not peremptorily passed either on the righteous or on the wicked, so that there was room left for them to pray for the increase of the happiness of the one, or for the mitigation of the torment of the other. Hence, in different respects, they prayed for all, both good and bad ; especially for those who were within the pale or enclosure of the church ; and above all, for such as had been useful to it, and highly esteemed by it. The principal thing which is said in vindication of their practice—for what we have just mentioned as the ground and reason of it will by no means justify it—is, that, though the souls of believers are in heaven, yet their happiness will not be, in all respects, complete, till the day of judgment. Accordingly, in their prayers, they chiefly had regard to the consummation of the blessedness of departed believers at Christ's second coming, together with the continuance of it till then ; without supposing that they received any other advantage by their prayers. But as the blessing they thus supplicated for them was not a matter of uncertainty, they observed that many things are to be prayed for which shall certainly come to pass, whether we pray for them or not,—such as the gathering in of the whole number of the elect, and the

ⁱ Psal. cii. 17, 18.

^k John xvii. 20.

^l See Sect. ' The Immediate Happiness of the Righteous after Death,' under Quest. lxxxvi.

coming of Christ's kingdom of glory. They hence suppose that the advantage of praying for the dead redounds principally to those who offer the prayers; as, by doing so, they express their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, the future blessedness of the saints, and the communion which there is between the church militant and the church triumphant. This is the fairest colour which can be put upon the ancient practice of the church, and the numerous statements in the writings of the fathers, concerning prayers for the dead.^m

Such was the practice of the church before we read of the fictitious place which the Papists call purgatory. In this place the Papists fancy that separate souls endure some degrees of torment, and are relieved by the prayers of their surviving friends. This opinion was not known to the church before the seventh century; and, as was observed under a former Answer,ⁿ is without any foundation from scripture. Now, as it was formerly defended, and is still practised by the Papists, the contrary doctrine is asserted in this Answer, namely, that we are not to pray for the dead. In proof of this doctrine, we shall offer a few remarks.

The state of every man is unalterably fixed at death; so that nothing remains which can be called an addition to the happiness of the righteous, or the misery of the wicked, but what is the result of the reunion of soul and body at the resurrection. Hence, to pray that the saints may have greater degrees of glory conferred upon them, or sinners a release from their state of misery, is altogether groundless and unlawful. That the state of man is fixed at death is sufficiently evident from scripture. Thus our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, speaks of the one as immediately 'carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom,'^o—by which, notwithstanding what some ancient writers assert to the contrary, we are to understand heaven; and he speaks of the other as sent to a place of torments, without any hope or probability of the least mitigation,—whereby hell, not purgatory, is intended. And the apostle says, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.'^p Here he means that all men must leave the world; and that, when they are parted from it, their state is determined by Christ, though not done in so public and visible a manner as will be done in the general judgment. Now, if the state of men be unalterably fixed at death, it may be justly inferred that there is no room for any one to put up prayers to God on their behalf. Prayer must have some promise on which it relies; otherwise it cannot be addressed to God by faith, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'nothing wavering.'^q If, then, we have no ground to conclude that our prayers shall be heard and answered, or if we have any doubt in our spirits whether the thing prayed for be agreeable to the will of God, our prayers cannot be put up in faith, and therefore are not lawful.

The Papists, in defence of the contrary doctrine, are very much at a loss for scriptures to support it. Yet there is a passage in the apocryphal writings, in which Judas Maccabeus and his company are represented as praying and offering a sin-offering, and thereby making reconciliation for some who had been slain in battle.^r Some persons reply to the argument founded on this passage, that the prayers for the dead here spoken of, are of a different nature from those which the Papists make use of in behalf of those whom they pretend to be in purgatory, or that Judas and his company prayed for nothing but what some of the Christian

^m That several of the fathers practised and pleaded for praying for the dead, is evident from what Cyprian says, *Epist. xxxix.* concerning the church's offering sacrifices, by which he means prayers for the martyrs, among whom he particularly mentions *Laurentius* and *Ignatius*, on the yearly return of those days on which the memorial of their martyrdom was celebrated. *Eusebius*, also, in the life of *Constantine*, *lib. iv. cap. lxxi.*, when speaking concerning the funeral obsequies performed for that monarch, says that a great number of people, with tears and lamentations, poured forth prayers to God for the emperor's soul. *Gregory Nazianzen* prayed for his brother *Cæsarius* after his death. *Vid. Ejusd. in Fun. Cæsar. Orat. x.* *Ambrose* prayed for the religious emperors, *Valentinian* and *Gratian*, and for *Theodosius*, and for his brother *Satyrus*. *Vid. Ejusd. de obit. Valentin. Theodos. et Satyr.* *Augustin* speaks of his praying for his mother *Monica*, after her decease, *Confess. lib. ix. cap. xiii.* *Epiphanius* defends this practice with so much warmth, that he can hardly forbear charging the denial of it as one of *Aerius'* heresies. *Vid. Epiphani. hæres. lxxv.* And some Popish writers, when defending their praying for the dead, have, with more malice than reason, charged the Protestants with being *Aerians*, on this account.

ⁿ See Sect. 'The Immediate Happiness of the Righteous after Death,' under Quest. lxxxvi.

^o Luke xvi. 22, &c

^p Heb. ix. 27

^q James i. 6.

^r 2 Mac. xii. 43—45.

fathers did, namely, that the departed might be raised from the dead; and that thus they simply expressed their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection. But, I think, a better reply is, that the argument is not taken from any inspired writing; and that no more credit is to be given to the book of Maccabees than to any other human composition, in which some things are true and others false. As for this book in particular, the author himself plainly intimates that he did not receive it by divine inspiration; for he says, 'If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.'^s This is very honestly said, but is not like the language of an inspired writer. Hence, nothing which is said in the book is a sufficient proof of any important article of faith or practice, such as that which we are now considering.

It is farther objected that the apostle Paul puts up a short and affectionate prayer for Onesiphorus, 'The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day;'^t while, as is concluded by some, Onesiphorus was dead at the time when the apostle wrote this epistle. There are two petitions put up, one in this verse for him, and another in verse 16, for 'his house;' and in chap. iv. 19, when Paul, according to his custom, salutes some of his friends, he makes mention of 'the household of Onesiphorus,' but not of himself. This turn Grotius himself gives of this scripture;^u and the Papists greedily embrace it, as it gives countenance to their practice of praying for the dead. This argument, however, is built on but a weak foundation. For though Paul, in the close of the epistle, salutes Onesiphorus' household, and not himself, it does not follow that he was dead; he might be absent from his family, as he often was when engaged in public service, being sent by the church as their messenger, to inquire concerning the progress and success of the gospel in other parts, or to carry relief to those who were suffering in Christ's cause. The apostle perhaps might be informed that he was then on his way to Rome, where he was himself a prisoner when he wrote the epistle; and if so, it would not have been proper to send salutations to him whom he expected shortly to see, while, at the same time, he testified the great love he bore to him and all his family, as being a man of uncommon zeal for the interest of Christ and religion.

2. They are not to be prayed for who have sinned the sin unto death. This sin we read of, in scripture,^x as what excludes persons from forgiveness. Such things are said concerning it as should make us fear and tremble, not only lest we should be left to commit it, but give way to those sins which border upon it. There is, however, enough expressed to encourage us to hope that we have not committed it; and this is the principal thing to be insisted on, when we treat on this sin in our public discourses, or when any are tempted to fear lest they are guilty of it.

Here let it be observed, that though it is called 'the sin unto death,' we are not to suppose that it is one particular act of sin, but rather a course or complication of sins, in which there are many ingredients of the most heinous nature. It cannot be committed by any but those who have been favoured with a gospel light; for it always includes a rejection of the gospel, which supposes revelation or preaching. Nor is it merely a rejecting of the gospel, though attended with sufficient objective evidence, in those who have not had an inward conviction of the truth of it, or whose opposition to it proceeds principally from ignorance; for the apostle says concerning himself, that 'though he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, yet he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief.'^y But it is a rejecting of the gospel which we once professed to embrace, and therefore has the nature of apostasy. Thus the scribes and Pharisees, when they attended on John's ministry, professed their willingness to adhere to Christ; and afterwards, when he first appeared publicly in the world, they were convinced in their consciences, by the miracles which he wrought, that he was the Messiah; though afterwards they were offended in him, and ashamed to own him, because of the humble state and condition in which he appeared in the world; and on this account, they in particular were charged with the sin in question. Again, it includes a re-

^s Mac. xv. 38.
^x Matt xii. 32.

^t 2 Tim. i. 18.
^y 1 Tim. i. 13.

^u Vid. Grot. in loc.

jecting of Christ and the known truth, out of envy, attended with reviling, persecuting, and using the utmost endeavours to extirpate and banish it out of the world, and beget in the minds of men the greatest detestation of it. Thus the Jews are said to have 'delivered Christ out of envy;' ² and with the same spirit, they persecuted the gospel. Such as are guilty of this sin, have no conviction in their consciences of any crime committed in regard to it, but stop their ears against all reproof, and set themselves, with the greatest hatred and malice, against those who, with faithfulness, admonish them. They also go out of the way of God's ordinances, and wilfully exclude themselves from the means of grace. These they treat with the utmost contempt; and they use all the endeavours in their power that others may be deprived of them. This condition they not only live, but die in; so that their apostacy is, not only total, but final.

I cannot but observe, however, that some are of opinion that this sin cannot be now committed, because we have not the dispensation of miracles, whereby the Christian religion was incontestably proved, in the time of our Saviour and the apostles. They who hold this opinion think that the Pharisees spoken of in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, were mainly charged with saying that Christ 'cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils;' whereby they intimated that those miracles which they had formerly been convinced of the truth of, as wrought by the finger of God, were wrought by the devil. This view of their case supposes that they were eye-witnesses to the working of miracles, which we cannot be; and it is hence inferred that the sin of which they were guilty cannot now be committed, inasmuch as the dispensation of miracles has ceased. But this reasoning will not appear so strong and conclusive, if we consider that, though the gospel is not now confirmed to us by miracles, yet we have no less ground to believe that the Christian religion was confirmed by means of them, than if we had been present when they were wrought. If, however, it should be alleged that a resisting of the evidence of miracles cannot, in every circumstance, be contained in the sin against the Holy Ghost, in our day; there are other things included in the description we gave of the sin unto death, as things in which it principally consists, which bear a very great resemblance to the sin of which the Pharisees were guilty. If persons, for example, formerly believed Christ to be the Messiah, and were persuaded that his being so was incontestably proved by the miracles which he wrought, and accordingly, were inclined to adhere to him, and embrace the gospel, in which his person and glory are set forth, and yet have afterwards apostatized from their profession; if their apostacy has been attended with envy and malice against Christ; if they have treated, with contempt and blasphemy, the evidence by which they once acknowledged the Christian religion to have been undeniably supported; if from carnal policy, and the love of this world, they have totally rejected that faith which they once professed; and if their apostate condition is attended with judicial hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and strong delusions, together with a rooted hatred of all religion, and a malicious persecution of those who embrace it; we cannot but conclude their sin to bear a very great resemblance to that which in scripture is called the unpardonable sin. Theirs is a most deplorable case; and it should be so far improved by us that we should use the utmost caution that we may not give way to those sins which bear the least resemblance to it. Doubting Christians, however, are to take heed that they do not apply the account which we have given of this sin to themselves, so as to be led to despair; for to produce such a result is not the design of any description of it which we have in scripture. Now, that they may be fortified against applying the account of it to themselves, we shall offer one or two observations. It is one thing peremptorily to determine that it is impossible for any one to commit this sin in our day, since the dispensation of miracles has ceased, for to say this, is, in effect, to suppose that we can have no evidence for the truth of the Christian religion but what is founded on ocular demonstration, such as they had who saw Christ's miracles; and it is another thing to determine concerning particular persons, that they are guilty of this sin. It is certain that the matter might be determined with special application to particular persons in the time of our Savi-

our and the apostles. For then there was, among other extraordinary gifts, that of discerning of spirits; and consequently it might be known whether they who apostatized from the faith of the gospel had formerly received a full conviction of its truth, and it might also be known, by extraordinary revelation, that God would never give them repentance, so that their apostacy would be final. It is more than probable that this view of the case was supposed by the apostle, when he speaks of some who had committed this sin, who were not to be prayed for. But these things cannot be known by us. Hence, I would not advise any one to forbear to pray for the worst of sinners, who seem most to resemble those that are charged with this sin, the matter not being certainly known by us. What, however, is principally to be considered for the encouragement of those who are afraid that they have committed this sin, is that persons may certainly know that they have not committed it, though they are in an unregenerate state. If they have not had opportunity or necessary means to attain the knowledge of the truth, and so remain ignorant of it; or if they have had sufficient means to know it, and have not improved them as they ought, yet they have not committed this sin, if they desire and resolve to wait on God in his ordinances, in order to their receiving good. Again, they who are under conviction of sin, disapprove of it, and have some degree of sorrow and shame for it, may certainly conclude that they have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Further, if persons have reason to think that their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that they have greatly backslidden from God; yet they ought not to conclude that they have committed this sin, if they are afraid lest they should be given up to a perpetual backsliding, or dread nothing more than a total and a final apostacy, and in consequence, are induced to pray against it, and to desire a broken heart, and that faith which at present they do not experience. In this case, though their state is dangerous, they ought not to determine concerning themselves that they have committed the sin unto death. [See Note 2 C, page 576.]

We ought to make several uses of this awful doctrine, and of the hope which there is that we have not committed the sin unto death. First, we should take heed that we do not give way to wilful impenitency, and a contempt of the means of grace, lest we should provoke God to give us up to judicial hardness of heart, so as to make sad advances towards the commission of it. Let us take heed that we do not sin against the light and conviction of our consciences, and wilfully neglect and oppose the means of grace; for whether any one's acting thus be the sin unto death or not, it is certainly a crime of the most heinous and dangerous tendency. Again, let doubting Christians take heed that they do not give way to Satan's suggestions, tempting them to conclude that they have committed this sin. Though they are sometimes afraid that they have committed it, they might determine that they have not, did they duly weigh what has been just observed concerning this matter. Finally, let us bless God that yet there is a door of hope; and let us resolve by his grace, that we will always wait on him in the ordinances which he has appointed, till he shall be pleased to give us ground to conclude better things concerning ourselves, even things which accompany salvation.

For What Prayer is to be Made.

We are now led to consider what we are to pray for.

1. We are to pray for those things which concern the glory of God. That we may know what these are, we are to inquire whether, if God should give us what we ask for, it would have a tendency to set forth any of his divine perfections, and so render him amiable and adorable in the eyes of his creatures, so that, in answering our prayers, he would act becoming himself. We are also to take an estimate of the adaptation of anything to promote his glory, from the intimation he has given us of it in his word. There we may observe, not only whether he has given us leave, but whether he has given us commands, and encourages us, to ask for it; more especially, whether he has promised to give it to us, and whether our receiving the blessing we ask for, has a tendency to fit us for his service.

2. We are to pray for those things which concern our own good, or the good of others. These are particularly insisted on in the Lord's prayer, which is explained

in the following Answers. It is hence sufficient for us, at present, to consider the good we are to pray for in general. Now, we are to pray for temporal blessings; which are the effects of divine bounty, and concerning which our Saviour says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.'^a We are also to pray for spiritual blessings, such as forgiveness of sin, strength against sin, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit to produce in us holiness of heart and life, and deliverance from and victory over our spiritual enemies. We are also to pray for the consolations of the Holy Ghost, arising from assurance of the love of God, whereby we may have peace and joy in believing; and for all those blessings which may make us happy in a better world.

3. We are to pray for those things which are lawful to be asked of God. The things we pray for must be such as it is possible for us to receive, and particularly such as God has determined to bestow, or given us ground to expect in the present world. We are not to pray for those blessings to be applied here, which he has reserved for the heavenly state; such as a perfect freedom from sin, from tribulation or temptation, or for our enjoying the immediate views of the glory of God. These things are to be desired in that time and order in which God is determined to bestow them. Hence, we are to wait for them till we come to heaven; and, at present, we are to desire only to be made partakers of those privileges which he gives to his children in their way thither.—Again, we are not to pray that God would inflict evils on others, to satisfy our private revenge for injuries done us. For revenge is in itself unlawful, and unbecoming a Christian frame of spirit, and contrary to the duty which was formerly considered of our praying for our very enemies, and seeking their good.—Further, we are not to ask for outward blessings, without setting bounds to our desires; nor are we to ask for them unseasonably, or for wrong ends. We are not to pray for them as though they were our chief good and happiness, or of equal importance with things which are more immediately conducive to our spiritual advantage. Hence, whatever measure of importunity we express in praying for them, is not to be inconsistent with an entire submission to the divine will, or with being satisfied that God knows what is best for us, or whether what we desire will, in the end, prove good or hurtful to us. Much less ought we to ask for outward blessings in order to the satisfying of unlawful desires, or, as the apostle James speaks, that we may 'consume them upon our lusts.'^b

a Matt. vi. 32.

b James iv. 3.

[NOTE 2 C. *Is any sin unpardonable?*—The phrase, 'the unpardonable sin,' is a startling one, and seems fairly to imply that there are limits to the intrinsic worth or efficacious power of the Redeemer's sacrifice. However popular the phrase is, and however sanctioned by not a few curious disquisitions on the part of respectable theological writers, it is, as I think, unwarranted by any statement in the Bible, and opposed to its current phraseology. Three texts have been adduced as giving it countenance,—Heb. x. 26; Heb. vi. 4—6; and Matt. xii. 31, 32. But the first of these does little more than teach that there is but one sacrifice for sin; the second states that a preference of idolatry or Judaism to the gospel of Christ, puts away the only means of moral renovation; and the third, which is the strongest, describes a man as rejecting the Christian evidences, and assuming the position of a scornful unbeliever. All the passages, in other words, mention, not what cannot, but what shall not, be forgiven: they speak, not of an unpardonable sinner, but of one who refuses pardon.

'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26. In a brief paper, published about a year ago, I stated my views of this text; and I may be excused for simply condensing here what I there said. 'The truth' which Paul speaks of is, not revealed truth in general, nor the influence of the gospel upon the heart, but the great doctrine which he had just unfolded and proved,—that Christ's sacrifice alone is availing, and possesses divine sufficiency for every purpose of redemption. To 'know this truth' cannot imply a better condition of soul than to 'escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Yet Peter describes persons who have so escaped (2 Pet. ii. 20—22.)—whose knowledge of Christ has been practical to the extent of freeing them from vice—as merely washed swine, not as swine transmuted into sheep,—as dogs of beastly inclination, not as dogs 'created anew' and 'converted' into lambs. 'To sin,' according to the primary meaning of the Greek word, is 'to go aside' or 'to miss the mark'; and 'to sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth,' or wilfully to go aside or miss the mark after having become acquainted with the great doctrine of the Christian atonement, must denote simply the knowing and pertinacious rejection of God's method of justifying the ungodly. Persons who practise this folly—whether they exchange Christianity for Judaism, or abandon it for sake of the showy rites of heathen or of Romish idolatry, or barter it away for the lures and enjoyments of the present world—will look in vain

among the ceremonies or pleasures of their choice for a means of expiating guilt. The one true atonement rejected and despised, 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins.' Whoever hears of the atoning death of the Son of God,—its surpassing worth, its divine completeness, its glorious adaptation to bring pardon and peace to the chief of sinners,—and after having surveyed its excellence, weakly or wilfully sets up his philosophy, or his alms-giving, or his devoteism, or some self-infliction, as a better refuge than it from the divine anger, or a surer means of obtaining the divine favour,—that man misses the mark of eternal life; he goes aside from the narrow way to heaven; he shuts his eyes on the hope, the only hope, set before him in the gospel, and welcomes 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' Now, 'if he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,' who in so wicked a fashion prefers the devices of man to Heaven's sole and divinely costly plan of mercy, 'treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith atonement was made, a common thing?' Yet such a man's fate is altogether of his own making; it is the fate, not of an unpardonable sinner, but of a sinner who scorns pardon; it arises from neither the magnitude of his sins nor defect in the Christian sacrifice, but altogether from his own egregious self-conceit, and his wilful blindness to the worth and grandeur of the Lord's atonement.

Without pausing to show how well these views of the passage in the tenth chapter of Hebrews agree with the scope of the apostle's reasoning, and with the general scheme of his doctrines, I shall now pass to a consideration of the text in the sixth chapter of the same book. 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'

The persons whom Paul describes were 'once enlightened.' But 'if the light which was in them was darkness, how great was that darkness?' Balaam 'saw the visions of the Almighty, and knew the knowledge of the Most High;' and yet was a sordid, hardened infidel. They had 'tasted the heavenly gift.' To 'taste' is to perceive; and 'gift,' in this and some other texts, is not the thing bestowed, but the disposition of bestowing it. The persons described had perceived or witnessed the benevolence of Christianity; they had probably seen its benign character in the miraculous cures effected by our Lord or his apostles; or they may even have discerned the salubrious character of its precepts, and the joyous complexion of its doctrines. They had also been 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' All persons were made so on whom the apostles imposed hands; yet they communicated not necessarily with the Holy Spirit's person, but only with his gifts. 'Holy Ghost,' when put by a metonymy for what the Holy Ghost produces means never communion with God, and seldom the enjoyment of regenerating or sanctifying influence, but generally the possession of supernatural endowments. Yet these, in the times of the apostles, were, in some instances, possessed by the unrenewed and unbelieving. 'Many,' said Christ, 'will say to me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.' Again, the persons whom Paul describes had 'tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' The phrase, 'the world to come,' bears a very different meaning in the scriptures to what it does in modern religious usage. 'His name shall be called the Everlasting Father,' or 'the Father of the world to come,' Isa. ix. 6; 'Unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak,' Heb. ii. 3; in these and other passages, the phrase, which, if strictly rendered, is 'the future age,'—the age of Christianity as contrasted to the age of Judaism,—means the Christian dispensation. The word 'powers' ought to be 'miracles;' and it denotes not alone what was intrinsically supernatural, but what divinely, because miraculously, attested that the gospel is true. Now, the persons described saw 'the miracles of the Christian dispensation;' they witnessed them in connexion with 'the good affair,' or dispensation 'of God;' they tasted or perceived both the ministry of reconciliation, and the mightiest testimonies which Jehovah bore to its doctrines. Were they, therefore, convinced of sin, and partakers of saving religious knowledge? Alas! a people more honoured, in a sense, than they,—a people who tried God, and proved him, and saw his works of love and miracle, forty years in the wilderness,—'always erred in their heart,' and ignominiously perished in impenitence. But it may be said that the persons of whom Paul speaks were such as might 'fall away,' or, more properly, 'fall back,' and that they must have been Christians, in order to be capable of becoming apostates. Falling back is simply transition,—transition from character, condition, rank, or even mere profession. Men can renounce only what they possess; professors mere profession,—Mohammedans mere Mohammedism. Now Paul tells from what the apostates fell back: they abandoned or forsook simply their 'enlightenment,' their communication with miraculous gifts, and their observation of the supernatural evidences of the Christian dispensation; they, in other words, expelled from their minds every favourable opinion of Christianity, and removed or kept their persons beyond the sphere of all the means, both ordinary and extraordinary, which were employed under the apostolic ministry for bringing sinners to acknowledge or believe the gospel.

If the remark which I have just made be duly considered, it will obviate all difficulty in what some persons regard as the most obscure clause in the text which I am considering: 'It is impossible to renew them again to repentance.' The meaning of the word 'repentance,' however, must previously be ascertained. John preached 'the baptism of repentance toward the remission of sins,' Mark i. 4. His disciples were the subjects of a repentance which merely pledged them by profession, and prepared them by the ordeal of religious instruction, to submit to the personal ministry of the Saviour. Few of them ever, and possibly none at the outset, possessed 'repentance unto life,' or 'repentance toward God.' Their repentance, and that of the persons described by Paul, were essentially the same. The

latter sprang from perception of merely the external evidences of truth, and existed in union with unregeneracy; and it necessarily amounted to no more than a profession of attachment to Christianity, and a docile attendance on the ministry of the gospel. What the apostates had possessed, to either change of mind or outward reformation, was at best but 'the form of godliness.' Now, the resumption of this was quite incompatible with their apostate condition: 'it was impossible to renew them again to repentance.' Having abandoned the profession of error, and embraced the profession of the truth, they 'fell back' to their original state, not only at the expense of relinquishing attendance on the Christian ministry, but in spite of the most convincing evidences which the new economy could furnish of the truth of Christianity. All the means of grace having been renounced, there was no instrumentality, no system of morals, no course of effort, which could reclaim them from error. They would not use the instituted ordinances of the gospel, and they even rejected the evidence of miracles. The impossibility of renewing them was, therefore, natural and necessary: yet it was not absolute, but only relative. It was an impossibility neither in regard to the magnitude of their sins, nor in regard to the intrinsic power of Christianity, nor in regard to the freeness and availability of the divine mercy, but simply and altogether in regard to the relative position which infidels or despisers of revealed truth occupy, as such, to the gospel. The apostates were irreclaimable only while they could not be approached by evidence or by the influence of Christian ordinances; in other words, they were irreclaimable, 'seeing they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' Their condition was akin to that of the original murderers of Christ. They contemned Christianity; they laboured to bring derision on the Saviour; they misconstrued or scorned the most splendid evidences of his heavenly mission and divine majesty; they ignominiously transfixed and exhibited to the view of enemies whatever in his cause they imagined to be weak or mortal; and thus, in enmity to God, and hatred of evangelical truth, and passion for the ascendancy of error, they were whirled round in the very vortex which, during the scene of the crucifixion, sucked down all the sentiments and feelings of the murderers of Jesus. But were the apostates, therefore, beyond the reach of the divine mercy? or had they committed unpardonable sin? What hinders that there may have been a day of influence from on high and of awakening for them, as truly as there was a day of Pentecost for their prototypes? Suppose them only to have emerged from their seclusion, and to have heard once more the preaching of an apostle, or to have heard anew the gospel's glad tidings, or to have witnessed afresh the stupendous evidences of the apostolic times that Christianity is true; and you will do no violence to any statement of Paul, you will follow out his own allusion to the crucifiers of the Saviour, you will think in unison with all the system of divine truth, and all the history of its highest achievements, if you imagine not a few of the apostates 'goaded to the heart' and 'receiving the word with all gladness and readiness of mind.'

I have perhaps said more on the text in the sixth chapter of Hebrews than was requisite. I view that text, however, as a key to those passages which speak of 'the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,' and have been regarded as affording prime sanction to the notion of 'an unpardonable sin;' and I have made my remarks somewhat minute, in order that those passages might, in a degree, be explained by anticipation, and might now, without the aid of any criticism, rise clearly and in their full and simple meaning into view. I have shown that 'world to come' means Christian dispensation; that 'Holy Ghost' is put, by a metonymy, for miraculous gifts or for supernatural evidence of the truth of Christianity; and that inaccessibility to pardon or the means of moral renovation, is only relative, and arises from rejection and neglect of the means of grace. Now, if these explanations have been appreciated, they will be found to have removed the chief difficulties from what the evangelists record respecting the sin against the Holy Ghost:—

'Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come, Matt. xii. 31, 32.' The statement in these verses, is, as I understand it, summarily this:—Any sin which merely defames Christ, but does not scorn the evidence of his mission, leaves the sinner accessible to the means of salvation; but the sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—because it rejects the chief or highest evidence that the gospel is true—shuts out the sinner from every instrumental influence, every method of persuasion, every means of grace employed under either the Jewish economy or the Christian, for bringing the ungodly to repentance. The Pharisees, whom our Lord was addressing, were guilty of self-righteousness and of perverting the word of God, but still stood in the way to be convinced of sin, and made partakers of pardon. They had even derided our Lord's claims to be considered the Messiah, they had denied his true Deity, they had blasphemed his whole character; still they listened to his discourses and observed his works, and were, in consequence, every moment eligible 'to be convinced of all, and judged of all,' and to be brought to the acknowledgment and belief of the truth. Now, however, 'they blasphemed the Holy Ghost,' they ascribed to the power of Beelzebub what belonged to the power of God, they contemned the miracles which Jesus worked by the energy of the Divine Spirit; they thus poured scorn upon the brightest evidences which ever had been exhibited or ever would be witnessed of the truth of a revelation, they despised the strongest attestation to the Messiahship of Jesus, they denied the genuineness of the grand sign-manual which heaven had affixed to the record of the gospel; and, guilty of such iniquities, they necessarily rejected all the ordinary and extraordinary means of grace, and sat down in a position which afforded not one approved, one available, one efficacious instrumentality for conducting sinners into the way of life. But why should it be thought that their sin was unpardonable or their condition hopeless? A solemn declaration is made, indeed, that a blasphemer of the Holy Ghost should not be forgiven; but is not the same declaration made often, very often, respecting *all* the workers of iniquity? 'God will by no means clear the guilty.' 'He that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life.' 'As many as have sinned without law shall also

perish without law;—these, and a hundred other passages, declare that *all* the unbelieving and the ungodly shall be unpardoned,—that the sin of unbelief, and many a sin besides, shuts out the perpetrator from the kingdom of God. But they all suppose the sinner to *persist* in his sin, and distinctly imply that he may ‘turn from it and live;’ nay, they are recorded with the express design of calling attention to the free, full pardon exhibited in the gospel, and of inciting the guilty to flee to Christ that they may receive it. Now, did the Lord of glory once, though but once, lay aside his benevolence, and all the usual methods of appeal employed in the revelation of mercy? Did he once, though but once, desert the grand object of his mission and his ministry,—‘the calling of sinners to repentance?’ The thought is not to be endured! No; he told the Pharisees the aggravated character of their sin, only that they might be warned of the extremity of their danger; he depicted to them the appalling tendency of their iniquity, only that they might be incited to renounce and abhor it; he explained to them how their blaspheming of miracles shut them out from every means of grace, only that they might be persuaded to think rightly of his mighty works, and accept him as their Saviour;—he, hence, without a pause, without a break in his appeal, passed from a denunciation of their sin to an exhibition of the grand subject of moral renovation: ‘Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by his fruit;’ he did not break away from them, or treat them with silence and indignation, as if they had been criminals beyond the reach of mercy, but he proceeded to address their judgment and invoke their conscience, and thus treated them as persons who still might feel the influence and realize the salutary results of heavenly exhortation and instruction. The grand truth which he had placed on the foreground of his ministry was still in his heart, and still maintained alliance with his ministrations and rebukes: ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him’—*WHOSOEVER believeth on him*—‘should not perish, but have eternal life.’

I have to notice still another text—but one referring to a totally different matter from those already considered,—‘If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death,’ 1 John v. 16, 17. This passage can, I think, be supposed to refer to any topic akin to the idea of some very peculiar and disastrous species of transgression, only by its being quite cut away from its context, and by the word *ἀμαρτία* throughout it being construed in a sense which, I suspect, it never bears. In the thirteenth verse of the chapter, the apostle states that he had written his epistle in order that those who believed might know that they had eternal life. He then proceeds to say respecting such persons—or true believers, possessors of eternal life—‘This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.’ Their abstract privilege, or exalted condition of possessing eternal life, was connected with the internal confidence that every prayer of their heart, which should accord with the divine will, would be heard. ‘And if we know that he hear us,’ adds the apostle, ‘whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.’ Not one blessing shall be refused—not one request shall be denied. All the petitions which shall certainly be answered, however, must not only be framed in the light of the divine word, but have reference to persons who are spiritually alive,—who possess eternal life. To enjoy a confidence that our scriptural requests will all be granted, and to be personal possessors of eternal life, are correlative and co-extensive. We have assurance of spiritual blessings for ourselves and others, only if we and they believe on the Son of God, and be spiritually living men; and no assurance whatever of these blessings—the blessings which belong to God’s people, and are enjoyed in a state of union to the Saviour—on the part of persons who are spiritually dead. Hence, continues the apostle, ‘If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.’ He is clearly speaking of asking blessings in that confidence of being heard which he had stated to be the privilege of believers,—blessings, too, which are peculiar to the condition, or enjoyable in the justified and regenerated state, of men who are spiritually alive. Faith in Christ and living unto God are correlative with the condition in which the blessings are received, or the confidence that when asked they will be bestowed. To determine, therefore, what persons may certainly enjoy the blessing, or on behalf of whom they may confidently be supplicated, we must look at the conduct of ‘brethren,’ or those who appear or profess to be believers, and ascertain as accurately as we can whether they be spiritually alive or spiritually dead. ‘If any man see his brother sin sin not toward death,’ *ἀμαρτανοντα ἀμαρτίαν μη πρὸς θάνατον*,—marked by such blemishes, defiled by such remaining corruptions, overtaken with such faults, or in general sinning in such circumstances, as do not evince him to be spiritually dead, as do not constitute *motion towards* death, *πρὸς θάνατον*—he shall treat that person as still a brother, as, notwithstanding his defects, a possessor of spiritual life, and shall pray for him as a brother, in confidence that the blessings of life, the peculiar boons of reviving and sanctifying grace, will be granted to his soul. I am not aware that the word *ἀμαρτία* is ever used to denote one act of transgression, one distinctive species of sinning, or what, in English idiom, is distinctively called ‘a sin;’ and still less that the verb *ἀμαρτανω*, either by itself, or followed by its cognate noun, can be understood to mean, committing one act or species of transgression. *Αμαρτία*, as to its general use at least, means sin in the abstract,—in reference either to any description of sin whatever, or to sin in the aggregate, whether actual, original, or both. See James i. 15; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 John iii. 4; and many other passages. “We are to suppose, then,” as Dr. Ridgeley himself observes, “not that ‘sin unto death’ spoken of by the apostle is any one particular act of sin, but rather that it is a course or complication of sins;” and so are we to suppose also, respecting ‘sin not unto death.’ In proof that the term is understood in a general or abstract way, we need only to look at what the apostle immediately adds,—‘All unrighteousness is sin; and there is sin not towards death.’ Commission of what the divine law forbids, or omission of what it commands, is, in all circum-

stances, and in the case of every sort of person whatever, sin; but, in one set of circumstances, with one set of aggravations, it is sin of such a nature as comports with persons being in a justified or spiritually living state; while, in another set of circumstances, and with another set of aggravations, it proves all who practise it to be spiritually dead. We are to distinguish, then, the apostle teaches, between such conduct and character as evince a professing 'brother' to be a self-deceiver and hypocrite,—and such as, though blameable and really sinful, comports with his being a sincere believer; and, according to the conclusion respecting him which we fairly draw, we are, or are not, to pray on his behalf, with confidence of being heard, for those blessings which are ever available to believers in Jesus, but are peculiar to them as possessors of eternal life. If a professing 'brother' sin 'toward death,' he may, as other parts of the divine word teach, be prayed for as an unrenewed man, that he may be converted and brought to the saving knowledge of the truth; but he may not, as the apostle shows, be prayed for as a believer, as a possessor of spiritual life, as one of that happy community who, 'whatsoever they ask of God, know that they have the petitions which they desire of him.' Due discrimination, in other words, is to be used in prayer. Just as we are not to pray for a believer, as though he were a stranger to the grace of God; so we are not to pray for an unbeliever, as though he were a renewed and sanctified man. Let the blessings of enlightening and renovating grace be supplicated on behalf of the spiritually dead: but let the blessings which follow the possession of eternal life, and comport with a state of believing on the Son of God, be supplicated on behalf of those only who have been born of God, and who do not commit sin in the manner or with the aggravations of the unrenewed in heart. See verse 18—that following in the text in question—compared with 1 John iii. 8, 9. What the apostle teaches in the verses in question, is thus in strict keeping with the scope of the context, and is a matter of great practical moment, but a matter which has no conceivable affinity whatever to the idea of an unpardonable sin.

I do not know whether I have succeeded in making my views of the texts discussed—especially of those in Hebrews and the gospels—clear and distinct. I shall be happy, however, if what I have said shall, while commending itself to the judgment, make a deeper impression than before upon the heart, of 'the love of God,' and 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' I regret that the idea of 'an unpardonable sin' should ever have prevailed, and deplore the low estimate which it is fitted to occasion of the glorious, the surpassing, the infinite worth of our Lord's atonement. A limited *efficiency* in redemption, is far, very far, from clouding the most gorgeous views possible of unlimited *sufficiency*. Whenever mercy is exhibited, it is seen to be infinite, divinely full and free; whenever the atonement is described, it is seen to be rich as the moral glory of the Redeemer's Deity, available for 'the chief of sinners,' able to save to the uttermost; whenever 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation' is displayed, it is seen to be higher than height, deeper than depth, surmounting man's loftiest iniquities, and profounder far than his deepest miseries. 'Where sin was filling up, grace has exceeding overflowed; so that while sin reigns by death, grace reigns through righteousness, on to life without end, through the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord of the redeemed.'—ED.]

HOW PRAYER IS TO BE MADE.

QUESTION CLXXXV. *How are we to pray?*

ANSWER. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, and deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins, with penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts, with understanding, faith, sincerity, fervency, love, and perseverance, waiting upon him, with humble submission to his will.

The Frame of Mind in which Prayer is to be made.

THIS ANSWER respects the manner of performing prayer, and the frame of spirit with which we are to draw nigh to God.

1. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God. Without this, our behaviour would be highly resented by him, and reckoned no other than a thinking him altogether such an one as ourselves. Some of the divine perfections have a more immediate tendency to excite an holy reverence. Accordingly, we are to consider him as omnipresent and omniscient, to whom our secret thoughts and the principle whence our actions proceed, are better known than they can be to ourselves. We are to conceive of him as a God of infinite holiness; so that he cannot but be highly displeased with that worship which is opposite to holiness, and which proceeds from a conscience defiled with sin, or is performed in an unholy manner. Thus the prophet says, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity;'^c that is, thou canst not behold it without the

utmost detestation ; and therefore, ‘if we regard it in our hearts, he will not hear our prayers.’^d We are also to have a due sense of the spirituality of his nature, that we may worship him in a spiritual manner. Hence, we are not to entertain any carnal conceptions of him, or frame ideas of him like those we have of finite or corporeal beings ; nor are we to think it sufficient that our external deportment is grave and has a show of reverence, when our hearts are not, at the same time, engaged in this duty, or disposed to give him the glory which is due to his name. We are also to draw nigh to him with a due sense of those perfections which tend to encourage us to perform this duty, with hope of finding acceptance in his sight. Accordingly, we are to conceive of him as a God of infinite goodness, mercy, and faithfulness, with whom is plenteous redemption, in and through a Mediator, which is suitable to our condition as indigent, miserable, and guilty sinners ; and as a God of infinite power, who is ‘able to do exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or think.’^e

2. We are to pray to God with an humble sense of our own unworthiness. This is the necessary result of high conceptions of his divine excellency and greatness ; whereby we are led to consider ourselves as infinitely below him. Indeed, the best of creatures are induced by conceptions of his divine excellency to worship him with the greatest humility. Thus the seraphim are represented, in the vision which the prophet Isaiah had of them, as ministering to and attending upon our Lord Jesus, when sitting on a throne in his temple ; and as ‘covering their faces and their feet with their wings,’ denoting their unworthiness to behold his glory, or to be employed by him in his service.^f But when we take a view of his infinite holiness, and our own impurity, we should be induced to draw nigh to him with the greatest humility. As dependent creatures, we have nothing but what we derive from him ; as frail dying creatures, we wither away, and are brought to nothing.^g Job compares our state to that of a leaf, which is easily broken and driven to and fro, or to that of the dry stubble, which can make no resistance against the wind that pursues it. The psalmist, speaking of man in general, says, ‘Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him ; or the son of man, that thou makest account of him ?’^h Elsewhere also it is said, ‘What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him, and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him ?’ⁱ These are humbling considerations. But we shall be led into a farther sense of our own unworthiness, when we consider ourselves as sinful creatures, worthy to be abhorred by God ; so that he might justly reject us, and refuse to answer our prayers.

But as this humble frame of spirit is so necessary for the right performance of this duty, we shall notice some things which are particular inducements to it. First, the greatest glory we can bring to God can make no addition to his infinite perfections. Thus it is said, ‘Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself ? Is it any pleasure,’ that is, any advantage, to the Almighty, ‘that thou art righteous ? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect ?’^k Elsewhere also it is said, ‘If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thy hand ?’^l denoting that it is impossible for us, by any thing we can do or suffer for his sake, to make him more glorious than he would have been in himself had we never had a being. Now, if there is nothing by which we can lay any obligations on God, we have reason to address ourselves to him with a sense of our own unworthiness.—Again, we are so far from meriting any good thing from the hand of God, that by our repeated transgressions, notwithstanding the daily mercies we receive from him, we give farther proofs of our great unworthiness. Indeed, if we are enabled to do any thing in obedience to his will, our ability is not from ourselves ; yea, it is contrary to the dictates of corrupt nature, and must be ascribed to him as the author of it.—Again, if we could do the greatest service to God by espousing his cause, and promoting his interest in the world ; it is no more than what we are bound to do ; and, at the same time, we must consider that ‘it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’^m—Further, the best believers recorded in scripture, have entertained a constant, hum-

d Psal. lxvi. 18.

i Job vii. 17.

e Eph. iii. 20.

k Chap. xxii. 2, 3.

f Isa. vi. 1—4.

g Job xiii. 25.

l Chap. xxxv. 7.

h Psal. civ. 3.

m Phil. ii. 13.

ble sense of their own unworthiness. Abraham, when he stood before the Lord, making supplications in behalf of Sodom, expressed himself thus: 'Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' Jacob says, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.'ⁿ And they who have been most zealous and eminently useful in promoting Christ's interest in the world, have had an humble sense of their own unworthiness. Thus the apostle says concerning himself, 'I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle';^o and he immediately adds, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'^p And elsewhere he styles himself, 'less than the least of all saints.'^q We have another instance of humility in prayer in the psalmist's words, 'I am a worm, and no man';^r which, so far as they have any reference to his own case, may give us occasion to infer that the most advanced circumstances in which any are in the world, are not inconsistent with humility, when drawing nigh to God in prayer. But if we consider him as speaking in the person of Christ, as several expressions in the psalm argue him to do, and cannot well be taken in any other sense;^s then we have, in the words referred to, the most remarkable instance of the humble address which was used by Christ in his human nature, when drawing nigh to God in prayer. And this is certainly a great motive to induce us to engage in this duty with the utmost humility.

3. We are to draw nigh to God in prayer, with a sense of our necessities, and of the sins which we have committed against him. We are to consider ourselves as indigent creatures, who are stripped and deprived of that glory and those bright ornaments which were put on man in his state of innocency; destitute of the divine image, and of all those things which are necessary to our happiness; unless he is pleased to supply our wants, forgive our iniquities, and grant us communion with himself; which things we are to draw nigh to him in prayer for. We are also, in this duty, to have a sense of sin, that is, of the guilt which we contract by it, and the punishment we have exposed ourselves to, that we may see our need of drawing nigh to God in Christ's righteousness; and also of the stain and pollution of it, that we may be induced to fall down before the footstool of the throne of grace, with the greatest degree of self-abhorrence. We are also to consider how we are enslaved to sin, and how prone we are at all times to 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,'^t and to 'walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'^u Moreover, we are to consider sin as deeply rooted in our hearts, debasing our affections, and captivating our wills. If we are in an unconverted state, we are to look upon it as growing and increasing in us, rendering us more and more indisposed for what is good, and setting us at a farther distance from God and holiness. If, on the other hand, we have ground to hope that we are made partakers of con-

n Gen. xxxii. 10. o 1 Cor. xv. 9. p Ver. 10. q Ephes. iii. 8. r Psal. xxii. 6.

s Many suppose that all those Psalms in which some particular expressions are referred to in the New Testament, as having their accomplishment in Christ, are to be understood as containing a double reference, namely, to David, as descriptive of his particular case, and to Christ, of whom he was an eminent type. But as for Psalm xxii., there are several expressions in it, not only applied to Christ in the New Testament, but which cannot well be understood of any other but him. In the first verse he uses the same words which were uttered by Christ on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 46, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In verse 8, 'He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him,' is an expression which was used by those who mocked and derided him, Matt. xxvii. 41, 43. And what is said in verses 14, 17, 'All my bones are out of joint; I may tell them, they look and stare upon me;' does not seem to be applicable to David, from any thing said concerning him elsewhere; but is a lively representation of the torment a person endures, when hanging on a cross, as our Saviour did; which had a tendency to disjoint the bones, and cause them to stick out. And when it is said, verses 16, 18, 'They pierced my hands and my feet,' and 'they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture,' the former was fulfilled in Christ's being nailed to the cross, and his side pierced with a spear; and the latter is expressly referred to as fulfilled in the parting of Christ's garments, and casting lots upon his vesture, Matt. xxvii. 35, as an accomplishment of what was foretold, by the royal prophet, in this Psalm. These expressions cannot, in the least, be applied to David, but are to be understood of our Saviour. We may conclude, therefore, that those words in verse 6, 'I am a worm,' &c. are peculiarly to be applied to him.

t Tit. iii. 3.

u Ephes. ii. 2.

verting grace, we are to consider that we have acted contrary to the highest obligations, and been guilty of the greatest ingratitude. These things we are to endeavour to be affected with, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, in order to our performing this duty aright.

The Graces which are to be exercised in Prayer.

1. Among the several graces which are to be exercised in prayer, is that of repentance. This is necessary because we are sinners, and as such, are to come into the presence of God with confession, joined with supplication, which must be made with a penitent frame of spirit. The contrary to such a frame is a tacit approbation of sin, and a kind of resolution to adhere to it; which is very unbecoming those who are pleading for forgiveness. Accordingly, when God promised that he would 'pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications,' he adds, that 'they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him,' or for it, 'as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,' and that this shall be done by 'every family apart, and their wives apart.'^x So when 'the priests, the ministers of the Lord,' are commanded to 'pray' that he would 'spare his people;' they are commanded, at the same time, to 'weep between the porch and the altar, to rend their hearts, and turn unto the Lord their God.'^y And when Israel are advised to 'take with them words,' and instructed how they should pray, they are exhorted to 'turn unto the Lord,' to repent of their seeking help from Assyria and Egypt, and of that abominable idolatry which they had been guilty of.^z

Now, there are several very proper subjects of meditation which, through the divine blessing, may excite the grace of repentance when we are engaged in the duty of prayer; particularly, the multitude of transgressions which are charged on the consciences of men by the law, that 'every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God';^a and especially, the ingratitude which we have reason to accuse ourselves of, our contempt of Christ and of the way of salvation by him discovered in the gospel, and our having done many things in the course of our lives which fill us with shame and sorrow, whenever we come into the presence of God, to pour out our hearts before him in this duty.

2. The next grace to be exercised in prayer, is thankfulness; prayer and praise ought to be joined together. Thus the psalmist says, 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed, O thou that hearest prayer.'^b That this is a part of prayer was observed under a former Answer; where we considered the many blessings for which we have reason to be thankful. I shall only add, at present, that it is matter of thankfulness that we, who might have been for ever banished from his presence, or have been brought before his judgment-seat as criminals doomed to everlasting destruction, have liberty of access to God, in hope of obtaining mercy from him, as sitting on a throne of grace. Moreover, we are to bless him, not only for leave to come before him, but for our having often experienced that he has heard and answered our prayers, and so fulfilled that promise, 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.'^c

That we may be brought into a thankful frame, we ought to consider the worth of every mercy; especially of those mercies which are spiritual, or accompany salvation. This we may judge of by the price which was paid for them. That price was no less than the blood of Jesus; and the apostle not only styles it 'precious,' but speaks of it as infinitely preferable to every thing which is 'corruptible.'^d We may, in some measure, also, take an estimate of the value of salvation by the worth and excellency of the soul, and by its being conducive to promote its eternal welfare.—Again, we are to consider every saving blessing as the fruit and result of everlasting love, and as the consequence of God's eternal design, in having chosen those who are the objects of his love to salvation in Christ.^e We must also

x Zech. xii. 10, et seq.

b Psal. lxxv. 1, 2.

y Joel ii. 13, 17

c Isa. xlv. 19.

z Hosea xiv. 1—3, 8.

d 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

a Rom. iii. 19.

e Jer. xxxi. 3.

consider the mercies of salvation as discriminating, or that God, in bestowing them, distinguishes his people from the world, and glorifies the riches of his grace in those who deserve to have been for ever the monuments of his wrath.—Again, we might here consider as an inducement to the grace of thankfulness, the aggravations of the sin of ingratitude. This sin is a virtual disowning of our obligation to God, or dependence on him from whom we receive all mercies; and a behaving of ourselves as if we were not indebted to him for them, or could be happy without him, or as if we were self-sufficient, and did not look upon him as the fountain of blessedness. It is also a refusing to give him the glory of his wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, which are eminently displayed in the blessings which he bestows. It is likewise unaccordant with the large expectations we have of the blessings he has reserved for his people, or promised to them, or that hope which he has laid up for them in heaven. Hence we cannot but conclude that ingratitude argues a person destitute of holiness; which eminently discovers itself in the exercise of thankfulness. Accordingly, the apostle joins ingratitude and unholiness together, when speaking of the vilest of men, whom he styles, ‘unthankful, unholy.’^f

3. Another grace to be exercised in prayer, is faith. This implies an habitual disposition of soul, proceeding from a principle of regenerating grace, whereby we are led to commit ourselves and all our concerns into Christ’s hands, depending on his merits and mediation for the supply of all our wants, considering him as having purchased, and as being authorized to apply, all the benefits of the covenant of grace, which are the subject of our supplications. More particularly, faith exerts and discovers itself in prayer, by encouraging the soul, and giving it an holy boldness to draw nigh to God, notwithstanding our great unworthiness. If we are afraid to come into the presence of an holy God; if destruction from him is a terror to us; if the threatenings he has denounced against sinners, such as we know ourselves to be, discourage us from drawing nigh to him, so that we are ready to say with Job, ‘Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him;’^g if his almighty power, which can easily sink us into perdition, overwhelms our spirits, and fills us with the utmost distress and confusion, so that we cannot draw nigh to him in prayer, considering him as an absolute God; we are encouraged by faith to look upon him as our covenant God and Father in Christ, and then all his divine perfections afford relief to us. His sin-revenging justice is regarded by faith, as fully satisfied by Christ’s obedience and sufferings; so that it will not demand that satisfaction at our hands which it has already received from our Surety, who was ‘made sin for us’ though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’^h His infinite power is no longer looked upon as engaged to destroy us, but rather as engaged to succour us under all our weakness; so that, as Job says, ‘He will not plead against us with his great power; no, but he will put strength in us.’ⁱ We consider it as ready to support us under the heaviest pressures, and to enable us to perform the most difficult duties, and to overcome all our spiritual enemies, who would be otherwise too strong for us. Hence, this attribute is so far from discouraging us from drawing nigh to God in prayer, that, by faith, we behold it as delighting to exert and glorify itself, in doing those great things for us which we have in view when we engage in this duty.

Faith farther discovers itself in prayer, by enabling us to plead, and apply to ourselves, the great and precious promises which God has given to his people in the gospel. As prayer cannot subsist without a promise, so we are enabled by faith to apprehend and plead the promises, and to say, ‘Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.’^k By faith we look upon God as ready to bestow the blessings which he has promised, and upon his faithfulness as engaged to make them good. Thus the psalmist says, ‘Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications; in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.’^l There is nothing that we want, or ought to pray for, but there are some promises contained in the word of God which faith improves and takes encouragement from, in this duty. As what we pray for respects either temporal blessings, or those which are spiritual and eternal, these are looked

^f 2 Tim. iii. 2.
ⁱ Job xxiii. 6.

^g Job xxii. 15.
^k Psal. cxix. 49.

^h 2 Cor. v. 21.
^l Psal. cxliii. 1.

upon by faith as promised. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'^m That there are promises on which faith rests might be very largely insisted on, and many instances might be given of them in scripture; but I shall more especially consider those promises which respect God's enabling us to pray, and his hearing and answering our prayers, which faith lays hold on and improves, in order to our performing this duty in a right manner. Thus there are promises of the Spirit's assistance to enable us to pray. This the apostle calls his 'making intercession for us, according to the will of God.'ⁿ And our Saviour says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'^o There are also promises which respect God's hearing and answering prayer. Thus it is said, 'In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me;'^p and, 'God will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.'^q That God will hear and answer prayer is considered as of very large extent. Thus our Saviour says, 'Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;'^r and, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'^s These universal expressions of God's giving believers 'what they will,' are to be understood of his granting their lawful and regular desires. Indeed, faith will never ask any thing but what tends to the glory of God; and it presents its requests with an entire submission to his will. Hence, its desires are always fulfilled; though it is far otherwise with respect to those prayers which are not put up in faith. Moreover, God has promised to hear and answer all kinds of prayer, provided they proceed from this grace. In particular, he promises to hear united prayers in the assemblies of his saints; as he says to Solomon, after the dedication of the temple, 'Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.'^t He also promises to hear those prayers which are put up to him in families. Where a small number, though it be but 'two or three,' are joined together, Christ has promised to be 'in the midst of them,'^u not only to assist them in this duty, but to give them what they ask for. There are also promises made to secret prayer. Thus when our Saviour encourages people to 'pray to their Father, which is in secret,' he tells them, 'My Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.'^x

Here it will be inquired, whether it be necessary in order to our praying by faith, that we be assured, at all times, that our prayer shall be heard. We answer, first, that it is not our duty to believe that every prayer shall be heard; for God heareth not sinners, that is, those who are under the reigning power of sin, and consequently are destitute of the grace of faith: nor will he hear those prayers that proceed from feigned lips. Thus it is said, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'^y Again, it is not the duty of those who have the truth of grace to believe that their prayer shall be heard when, by reason of their infirmity, or the weakness of their faith, they ask for that which is unlawful, and does not redound to the glory of God and their real good. Again, even if what we pray for may be for the glory of God, and redound to our advantage, it is not our duty to determine, with too great peremptoriness, that he will certainly grant what we ask, immediately, or in the particular way which we desire: for he may answer prayer, and yet do it in his own time and way. Further, it is not our duty to believe assuredly, that God will give us all the temporal blessings which we ask,—especially if they be not absolutely necessary for us; for he may answer us in value, though not in kind, and so give spiritual blessings, instead of those temporal ones which we pray for. In this case none will say that he is unfaithful to his promise, though we have not those blessings in kind which we desire. It is hence our duty, and the great concern of faith in prayer, to be assured that, as God knows what is best for us, so he will make good his promises, in such a way that we shall have no reason to conclude ourselves to have been disappointed, or that we have asked in faith but have not obtained.

m 1 Tim. iv. 8.

q Psal. cii. 17.

u Matt. xviii. 20.

n Rom. viii. 27.

r John xvi. 23.

x Chap. vi. 6.

o Luke xii. 13.

s Chap. xv. 7.

y Psal. lxvi. 18.

p Psal. lxxxvi. 7.

t 2 Chron. vii. 15.

I am sensible there is a difficulty in the mode of expression used by the apostle James, 'But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.'^z By this language, the apostle does not intend that he who doubts whether his prayer shall be answered, cannot be said, in any sense, to pray in faith. For, as assurance of our salvation is not of the essence of faith, so that faith cannot subsist without it; so assurance, or a firm persuasion that the very thing we ask shall be given, is not such an essential ingredient of faith in prayer, as to warrant us to determine, that for want of it, we shall receive nothing which is good from the Lord. I conceive, therefore, that the apostle, by 'wavering,' in this text, has reference to our being in doubt about the object of faith, or to our not being steadfast in the grace of faith, but praying with hypocrisy. For he illustrates it by the similitude of 'a wave driven with the wind,' which sometimes moves one way, at other times the contrary; and he farther explains it, when he says, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'^a Hence, the person whom he describes as 'wavering' is the same with 'a double-minded man,' or an hypocrite. Such an one cannot ask in faith. The apostle, therefore, does not mean that no one can exercise this grace in prayer, but he who has a full assurance that his prayer shall be answered in the particular way which he expects.

It is objected by some that they have no faith; and as this grace must be exercised in prayer, they are very often discouraged from performing that duty. But though the want of a prepared frame of spirit for any duty, affords matter of humiliation, it is no excuse for the neglect of it. As for prayer, in particular, we are to wait on God in it for a prepared frame of spirit, that, by means of this, we may draw nigh to him in a right manner, as well as for a gracious answer from him. Again, if we cannot bring glory to God by a fiducial pleading of the promises, or applying them to ourselves; we must endeavour to glorify him by confessing our guilt and unworthiness, and acknowledging that all our help is in him. Again, it is possible for us to have some acts of faith in prayer, when we are not sensible of them, and even bewail our want of this grace. Further, if none were to pray but those who have faith, it would follow that none must pray for the first grace, which supposes a person to be in an unregenerate state. Yet, such are obliged to perform this duty as well as they can, and therein to hope for that grace which may enable them to do it as they ought.

It is objected by others that, though they dare not lay aside the duty of prayer, yet, as they do not experience those graces which are necessary for the right performance of it, nor any returns of prayer, they have no satisfaction in their own spirits. But there may be faith in prayer, and yet no immediate answer to prayer. God, in answering prayer, acts in a way of sovereignty; and he will have his people know that if he grants their requests, it shall be in his own time and way. Hence, it is their duty to wait for him till he is pleased to manifest himself as a God hearing prayer, and till, in consequence, the discouragements which at present they labour under are removed. Besides, there are other ways by which the truth of grace is to be judged of, besides our having sensible answers of prayer. Sometimes, indeed, God may give many intimations of his acceptance of us, though, at present, we know it not.

4. The next grace to be exercised in prayer, is love to God. This implies an earnest desire of his presence, delight in him, or taking pleasure in contemplating his perfections as the most glorious and amiable object. Desire supposes him, in some measure, withdrawn from us, or that we are not possessed of that complete blessedness which is to be enjoyed in him; and delight supposes him present, and, in some degree, manifesting himself to us. Now, love to God, in both these respects, is to be exercised in prayer. Is he in any measure withdrawn from us? We are, with the greatest earnestness, to long for his return to us, whose loving-kindness is better than life. Is he graciously pleased, in any degree, to manifest himself to us as the fountain of all we enjoy or hope for? His doing so will have a tendency to excite our delight in him, and induce us to conclude that our happi-

ness consists in the enjoyment of him. These graces are to be exercised at all times, but more especially in prayer; for this is an offering up of our desires to God, in which we press after the enjoyment first of himself, and then of his benefits. And as we are to bless and praise him for the discoveries we have of his glory, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to the securing of our spiritual good and advantage; we, in doing so, express that delight in him which is the highest instance of love.

5. Another grace to be exercised in prayer, is submission to the will of God. In practising this, we leave ourselves and our petitions in his hand, sensible that he knows what is best for us. The submission required does not include a being indifferent whether our prayers are heard or not; for to have this feeling would be to contradict, by the frame of our spirits, what we express with our lips. Whatever may be concluded to be lawful for us to ask, as redounding to our advantage, and as expressly promised by God, we ought to request at his hand in prayer; and if we pray for it, we cannot but desire that our prayer may be heard and answered. Now, this desire is not opposed to that submission to the divine will which we are speaking of, provided we leave it to God to do what he thinks best for us, being content that the manner of his answering us, as well as the time of his bestowing those blessings which we want, together with the degree of them, especially if they are of a temporal nature, ought to be resolved into his sovereign will. Thus concerning the graces which we are to exercise in prayer.

Requisites to the Graces which are to be exercised in Prayer.

There are some things mentioned in this Answer, which are necessary to our exercising the graces of which we have been speaking. These are the enlightenment of our minds, the enlargement of our hearts, and our having sincerity in the inward part.

1. There must be some degree of understanding. Ignorance is so far from being, as the Papists pretend, the mother of devotion, that it is inconsistent with the exercise of those graces with which we ought to draw nigh to God in prayer. The affections, indeed, may be moved, where there is but a very little knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel; but they will at the same time be misled. Nor, in such a case, can raised affections any more be called religious devotion, than the words or actions of one who is in a frenzy, can be called rational. Hence, as prayer is unacceptable without the exercise of grace; so grace cannot be exercised without the knowledge of the truth, as derived from the sacred treasury of scripture. Here we might consider, that we must know something of God who is the object of prayer, as well as of all other acts of religious worship. We must also know something of Christ the Mediator, through whom we have access to him, as well as acceptance with him; and something of the work and glory of the Holy Ghost, on whom we are to depend for his assistance in presenting our supplications to God. We must know our necessities, otherwise we cannot tell what to ask for; and also the promises of the gospel, otherwise we cannot be encouraged to hope for an answer.

2. In order to our exercising grace in prayer, we must have some degree of enlargedness of heart. By enlargedness of heart is meant that state of mind in which every thing tending to contract our affections, abate the fervency of our spirits, or hinder that importunity which we ought to express for the best of blessings, is removed. Now, our hearts may be said to be enlarged in prayer, when we draw nigh to God in this duty with delight and earnest longing after his presence, and an interest in his love, which we reckon preferable to all other blessings; when we are affected with a becoming sense of his glorious perfections, and our own nothingness, in order to our adoring him, and coming before him with the greatest humility; when we have suitable promises given in, and are enabled to plead them with a degree of hope, arising from the goodness and faithfulness of God, that he will fulfil them, more especially as we draw nigh to him as to a covenant-God; and when our thoughts and affections are engaged without wandering, weariness, or lukewarmness, and filled with importunity, agreeable to the importance of the duty, and our absolute need of the blessings we pray for.

3. In order to our exercising those graces which are necessary for our drawing nigh to God aright in prayer, we must have sincerity of heart. This includes much more than what is generally so called, as opposed to dissimulation in those who perform some good actions merely to be seen of men, or who take up religion to answer some base and vile end which they have in view. In this respect a sincere person is one who is no dissembler. But the sincerity which we are speaking of, consists in a person's acting from a principle of grace implanted in regeneration, or in his being able to appeal to God, as Job does, 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked;' ^b that is, that there is no reigning sin, whereby my heart is alienated from thee, or set against thee. A sincere person is such an one as our Saviour describes, when he speaks of Nathanael, and gives him this character: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' ^c In this case, a person's heart and actions go together; and he may truly say, as David does, 'Attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.' ^d Thus concerning the graces which are to be exercised in prayer, and what is necessary in order to our exercising them.

Perseverance in Prayer.

What is farther observed concerning prayer, is that we are to persevere in it; resolving not to desist from waiting on God in it, whatever seeming discouragements may, at present, lie in our way. Prayer is not a duty to be performed only at some certain times; as the prophet speaks of those who, 'in their affliction, will seek God early;' ^e or, as the mariners in Jonah, who 'cried, every man unto his god,' in a storm, though it is probable they seldom prayed at other times. ^f But we are to 'pray always with all prayer and supplication, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance;' ^g that is, we ought always to endeavour to be in a praying frame, and on all occasions to lift up our hearts to God for direction, assistance, and success in every thing we do agreeably to his will, and for a supply of those wants which daily recur upon us.

There are various discouragements in our way which, through our unbelief, and the prevalency of corruption, often prevent our going on in this duty. Thus we are sometimes discouraged from persevering in prayer, by reason of the deadness and stupidity of our spirits, which we cannot bring into a suitable frame for the discharge of this duty; and therefore we are ready to conclude that, while we draw nigh to God with our lips, our hearts are far from him. This is, indeed, a very afflictive case; but we ought not to take occasion from it to lay aside the duty, but ought rather to depend on the assistance of the Spirit, to enable us to perform it in a right manner.

Another discouraging circumstance is, God's denying us sensible returns of prayer. This he may do for various reasons. Sometimes he sees defects in prayer, which he is obliged to testify his displeasure against; and this he sometimes does by hiding himself, or, as it were, withdrawing from us, and, in all appearance, shutting out our prayers, that we may take occasion to search out the secret sin which lies at the root of our defects, and confess it, and be humbled for it. Thus when Joshua, after a small defeat which Israel had received by the men of Ai, fell upon his face, and spread the matter before the Lord in prayer, God condescends to tell him the reason of the defeat, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing; therefore could they not stand before their enemies.' ^h And when the sin was discovered, and Achan who troubled them was punished, what he asked for was granted. Again, God may deny an immediate answer of prayer, out of his mere sovereignty, in order that we may know that it is not for us to prescribe to him the time or way in which he shall dispense those benefits, which are not owing to our merit, but his own grace.

Sometimes we pray, but do not use other means, which God has appointed for

^b Job x. 7.
^f Jonah i. 5.

^c John i. 47.
^g Eph. vi. 18.

^d Psal. xvii. 1.
^h Josh. vii. 10—12.

^e Hos. v. 15.

obtaining the blessing. Thus when Israel was disheartened, being pursued by Pharaoh and his host, and did not care to move out of their places, Moses addressed himself to God for them in prayer; and 'the Lord said unto him, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;' and then he ordered him to 'lift up his rod and stretch it over the sea, and divide it, that they might go through the midst thereof on dry ground.'ⁱ We are not only to pray, but to use other means which God has appointed; without which we cannot expect that prayer should be answered. Thus Hezekiah, when sick, prayed to God, who assured him that he had heard his prayers, and would heal him, but that, nevertheless, he was to use the means which God had ordered, by 'taking a lump of figs and laying it on the boil.' This he did accordingly, and was restored to health.^k Do we pray for a comfortable subsistence in the world? We must, if we expect that God should answer us, use industry in our callings, as well as own him by prayer and supplications. Do we pray for any of the graces of the Spirit, in order to the beginning or carrying on of the work of sanctification? We must, at the same time, attend on the means of grace, which God has ordained for that purpose. Or do we pray for assurance of the love of God, and for the spiritual peace and comfort which are the result of that assurance? We must be diligent in the performance of the work of self-examination; else we are not to expect that God will answer our prayers.

Sometimes God delays to answer our prayers, because we have not given him the glory of former mercies, or because he designs to try our patience, whether we are inclined, not only to wait upon him, but to wait for him. Thus the prophet says, 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.'^l So the psalmist says, 'As the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the eyes of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.'^m And elsewhere the psalmist, though he was in great depths, and stood in need of an immediate answer when he cried to the Lord, yet determines to 'wait for him,' and to 'hope in his word;' that is, while he is expecting a mercy, he does not despair of having it in the end, because he depends on God's word of promise. He resolves to 'wait as those that watch for the morning;'ⁿ and he thus practises two graces, namely, patiently waiting for the blessing expected, and yet earnestly desiring it. The practising of these graces is our indispensable duty, whereby we glorify God, sensible that it is not for us to prescribe to him when he should fulfil our desires. We ought to say, with Jacob, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;'^o that is, I will persevere in prayer till thou art pleased to give me all the blessings I stand in need of, and bring me into that state in which I shall be satisfied with thy goodness, and my imperfect prayers turned into endless praises.

i Exod. xiv. 15, 16.
m Psal. cxxiii. 2.

k Isa. xxxviii. 21.
n Psal. cxxx. 1 5, 6.

l Hab. ii. 1.
o Gen. xxxii. 26.

THE RULE OF DIRECTION FOR PRAYER.

QUESTION CLXXXVI. *What rule hath God given for our direction in the duty of prayer ?*

ANSWER. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of praying ; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which our Saviour Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.

QUESTION CLXXXVII. *How is the Lord's Prayer to be used ?*

ANSWER. The Lord's Prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern according to which we are to make other prayers, but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty.

The Necessity of a Rule of Direction for Prayer.

As to what is said in the former of these Answers, concerning the word of God being a rule for our direction in prayer, it may be observed that we need some direction in order to our performing this duty. Man is naturally a stranger to both God and himself ; he knows but little of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and is not duly sensible of the guilt which he contracts, or the mercies which he receives ; and, in consequence, he is at a loss as to the matter of the duty in which he is to engage. It is certain, that many have a general notion of religion, or of some moral duties, which they are sensible of their being obliged to perform, and yet are unable to address themselves to God in such a manner as he requires ; so that it may truly be said of them, that ' they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness.'^p We find that the disciples themselves, who were intimately conversant with Christ, and who, as must be supposed, often joined with him in prayer, were, notwithstanding, at a loss as to this duty ; and therefore they said, ' Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'^q

The Word of God the Rule of Direction for Prayer.

It is farther observed that the word of God is to be made use of for our direction in prayer. This is evident from the fact that we are to ask nothing but what is agreeable to his revealed will, which is contained in his word. Nor will any one who is well acquainted with scripture have reason to say, that he wants sufficient matter for prayer. This is a very useful Head ; and we shall consider several things in scripture which ought to be improved, in order to our direction and assistance in the performance of this duty.

I. The historical parts of scripture, which contain an account of the providences of God in the world and the church, may be of use for our direction in prayer. As we are to pray, not only for ourselves but for others, his former dealings with his people will furnish us with matter accommodated to our observations of the necessities of the church of God in our day.

1. We find, from scripture, that the sins which a professing people have committed, have been followed with many terrible instances of the divine wrath and vengeance. Thus we have an account of the universal apostacy of the world from God, which occasioned their being destroyed by a flood ; of the unnatural lusts of the inhabitants of Sodom, for which they were consumed by fire from heaven ; and of the idolatry and other vile abominations committed by the Israelites, for which ' God was wroth, and greatly abhorred them,' and they were exposed to many temporal and spiritual judgments, so that, as the psalmist says, ' He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men ; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.'^r We may hence take occasion to inquire whether we have not been guilty of sins equally great, and, it may be, of the same kind ; which are to be confessed, and the judgments entailed by them to be deprecated. In the New Testament, also, we read of some flourishing churches, planted by the apostles in the beginning of the gospel dispensation, which have nothing left

but a sad remembrance of the privileges which they once enjoyed ; in whose history what Christ says concerning his removing ' his candlestick out of its place,' was soon fulfilled.^s Now, the case of these churches is of use for our direction in prayer, that he would keep his church and people of the present day from running into the same sins, and exposing themselves to the same judgments.

2. We have an account, in scripture, of the church's increase and preservation, notwithstanding the darkest dispensations of providence, and the most violent persecutions from its enemies. When they were in hard bondage, and severely dealt with in Egypt, it is observed that ' the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew ;'^t and when they, in all appearance, were nearest to ruin, God opened a door for their deliverance, and often did great things in their behalf, which they looked not for. We have also an historical account in scripture of God's owning and encouraging his people, so long as they kept close to him ; and of his visiting their iniquities with a rod, when backsliding from him. Indeed, whatever we read concerning the providences of God towards particular believers in the Old or New Testament, is of very great use for our direction in prayer. Their experiences are recorded for our instruction, and their necessities, that we may know what to pray for, as far as there is an agreement between the account we have of them, and what we find in ourselves.

II. The word of God, as it is a rule of faith, contains those great doctrines, without the knowledge of which we cannot pray aright. Thus we have an account in scripture, not only of the being and perfections of God, which may be known by the light of nature, but of those glorious truths which cannot be known but by divine revelation.

1. We have an account of the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is considered as giving all spiritual blessings to his chosen people, in and through a Mediator. The Son is considered as invested in this office and character, and, as God incarnate, procuring for us, by his obedience and death, forgiveness of sins and a right to eternal life. The Holy Ghost is considered as a divine person, and therefore equal with the Father and Son, yet as subservient to them in his method of acting ; as the application of redemption accomplishes the design of the purchase of it, just as the purchase of it was a means to bring about that ' purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began.'^u These doctrines are necessary to direct us in those things which respect the distinct glory which we are to give to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the method in which we are to hope for the blessings which we ask in prayer. The apostle, speaking of this duty, supposes that we are acquainted with these doctrines, when he says, ' Through him,' that is, Christ, ' we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'^x

2. In the word of God, we have not only an account of the works of nature and providence, or of God's being the Creator and Governor of the world, which we have some knowledge of by reasoning from the divine perfections ; but we have an account of those works which have an immediate reference to our salvation, and of that special providence in which God expresses a greater regard to the heirs of salvation than to all the world besides. When we draw nigh to God in prayer, we are to consider him as the God to whom we owe, not only our being as men, but our well-being as Christians, delivered from that ruin which we brought on ourselves by our apostacy from him. We are also, as the apostle expresses it in his affectionate prayer for the church at Ephesus, to consider ' what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.'^y And when we survey the works of providence, we are not merely to think of God as the Governor of the world in general, but to consider what have been those special acts of providence by which he has governed man before and since the fall. Accordingly, we are to consider the first covenant as made with man in innocency ; and the covenant of grace as a dispensation of grace, established in and with Christ as the Head of the elect, in order to their being delivered from that state of sin and

^s Rev. ii. 5.^t Exod. i. 12.^u 2 Tim. i. 9.^x Eph. ii. 18.^y Chap. i. 18, 19.

misery into which they had brought themselves. These doctrines will be of use for our direction in prayer, as we are led by them to acknowledge our fallen state, what we were by nature, and what we should have been had we been left in that state; and are also led to adore the riches of God's grace, as he brings the greatest good to his saints out of the greatest evil.

3. The word of God gives us a distinct account of the offices of Christ, as they are suited to the necessities of his people, and also shows us what we are to ask with a particular relation to each of them, and what hope we have that he will grant our request. As he is appointed by the Father to be our High Priest, to make atonement for sin; our Advocate, to plead our cause; our Prophet, to lead us in the way of salvation; and our King, to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies; so we are, in our prayers, to improve the discoveries made of him in these offices, as a means to direct us as to the subject both of prayer and of praise.

III. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as we have an account in it of the duties which are to be performed by us as men or as Christians, in every condition of life, and in all the relations which we stand in to one another. As for duty in general, or that obedience which we owe to God, it cannot be performed but by his assistance; which is humbly to be asked in prayer. Accordingly, we are to say, as one does, "Lord, work in me that which thou requirest, and then require what thou plearest." Here we might show how all the commands which God has given us may be of use to direct us in prayer, and to lead us to apply to him that he would enable us to obey them; how all his prohibitions of sin may be of use to instruct us what to deprecate, when we pray that he would keep us from our own iniquities, and what to confess before him, and implore the forgiveness of; and how all those commands which respect instituted worship, or our attendance on the ordinances, and the exercise of various graces in the whole course of our conversation, are of use to direct us what to ask in reference to his worship, and particularly in reference to the advantage we hope to receive under the means of grace, whenever we draw nigh to God in the way which he has appointed.

IV. As the word of God contains many promises and predictions, together with their accomplishment, for the encouragement of our faith and hope in prayer, it is of use to direct us in the performance of this duty. As for the predictions which are fulfilled, so far as they respect the blessings which God designed to bestow on his church, they are equivalent to promises; and we are to take occasion from them to adore and magnify his faithfulness, and to hope that whatever remains to be done for us, or for his people in general, shall also have its accomplishment.

The promises which are contained in scripture, are also a motive and inducement to prayer. They are a declaration of God's will to give the blessings which he sees necessary for us; and therefore are of great use in order to our performing this duty aright. Thus God gives an intimation of the great things which he will do for his people, or bestow upon them, when he says, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.'^z There are also many expressions of a similar nature, which contain the form of a promise.—But besides these, there are passages which are equivalent to promises, and may be applied by us as if they were laid down in the same form as the promises generally are. Thus when God is said, in his word, to be able to do his people good, or to bestow some particular blessings upon them, they have ground to conclude that he will do it, or that his power shall be engaged in their behalf. Thus God is said to 'be able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.'^a And elsewhere it is said, 'God is able to make all grace abound towards' his people, 'that they always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.'^b This is the same as if it had been said that he would do this for them.—Again, any scripture in which God is said to glorify any of his perfections in giving those blessings which his people want, is also equivalent to a promise. Thus, when 'the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suf-

^z Jer. xxxi. 33.

^a Jude, ver. 24.

^b 2 Cor. ix. 8.

fering, and abundant in goodness and truth,'^c &c., it is the same as if he had said that he would show mercy to them, since the design was to encourage them to hope for this blessing.—Further, whatever blessings are said to be purchased by Christ as our Redeemer, or prayed for by him as our Advocate, may be included in the number of promised blessings; for they will certainly be applied by him, who will not lose what he has purchased by his blood, and is never denied what he asks.—Again, the universal experience of believers, relating to the blessings which accompany salvation, contains the nature, though not the form, of a promise. Hence, when this is recorded in scripture, for the encouragement of others in all succeeding ages, it is as much to be applied by us when we are in like circumstances, as though it were more directly promised to us. Thus when God's faithful servants are said to be 'kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation;'^d or when the psalmist says, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;'^e these and similar expressions are to be applied by us as promises.—Again, that which is proposed to us, or which we are to have in view as the end of our attending on ordinances, is equivalent to a promise. Accordingly, when we are commanded or encouraged to pray and hope for any spiritual blessings, while waiting upon God in ordinances in the way which he requires, it is the same as if he had said that he would give us those blessings. If a believer is thirsty, and encouraged to come to the waters,—if he wants grace or peace, and is told that they are to be attained in ordinances; the mere intimation that we are to seek these blessings in such a way, is equivalent to a promise.—Further, God's seeing our distress, or knowing our wants, is sometimes to be understood in scripture as containing the nature of a promise. Thus when our Saviour tells his disciples, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;'^f his words are the same as if he had told them that God had promised or designed to bestow those outward blessings upon them. And when he designed or promised to deliver his people out of their bondage in Egypt, he says, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people; I know their sorrows,'^g &c.

Having thus shown the manner in which the promises are laid down in scripture, we shall now consider how they are to be made use of in order to our direction and encouragement in prayer. Here it may be observed that the promises respect either outward or spiritual blessings, both of which we are to pray for. Thus the apostle says, 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'^h The former respects the temporal dispensations of providence; the latter, grace and glory, or the things which accompany salvation.

1. We shall consider the promises which respect temporal or outward blessings, which we are obliged to pray for, as we stand in need of them. These are of various kinds. There are promises of health and strength, whereby our passage through this world may be made easy and comfortable, and we better enabled to glorify God in the present life. Thus it is said, 'Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones;'ⁱ and, 'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.'^k There are promises of food and raiment, or the necessary provisions and conveniences of life. 'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'^l And, 'He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.'^m There are promises of comfort and peace in our dwellings. 'Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.'ⁿ And, 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'^o And, 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth and for evermore.'^p There are promises of quiet and composed rest by night, on our beds. 'Thou shalt take thy rest in safety; also thou shalt lie down and none shall make thee afraid.'^q And, 'When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.'^r

c Exod. xxxiv. 4, 6.

g Exod. iii. 7.

l Psal. xxxvii. 3.

p Psal. cxxi. 8.

d 1 Pet. i. 5.

h 1 Tim. iv. 8.

m Deut. x. 18.

q Job xi. 18, 19.

e Psal. xxxvii. 25.

i Prov. iii. 7, 8.

n Job v. 24.

r Prov. iii. 24.

f Matt. vi. 32.

k Psal. ciii. 5.

o Psal. xci. 10.

There are promises of success and a blessing in our worldly callings. 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.'^s And, 'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the fruit of thy cattle, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land, in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand. And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shalt not borrow.'^t And, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.'^u There are promises of an entail of blessings on our families. 'Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.'^x And, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children.'^y And, 'The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.'^z And, 'Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.'^a I might have mentioned many more promises of outward blessings which God will bestow on his people; though with the limitation that they are subservient to his glory, and their real good. Thus there are promises respecting riches, 'Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever;'^b and honours, 'Them that honour me I will honour;'^c and long life, 'Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.'^d 'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.'^e Or there are promises that, if God does not think fit to give his people long life, he will take them out of the world in mercy, and gather them into a better, to prevent their seeing the evil which he designs to bring on the inhabitants of the earth. 'The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.'^f He has also promised some blessings which respect their good name. 'I will make you a name and a praise among all the earth.'^g 'The memory of the just is blessed.'^h

But what I shall principally add concerning outward blessings, is that God has promised, not only that he will give them to his people, but that he will sanctify them to them for their spiritual advantage, and that he will enable them to improve them aright to his glory, so that the blessings shall become more sweet and desirable. Thus God has promised that he will free his people, who enjoy outward good things, from the sorrow which is often mixed with them, and which tends greatly to embitter them. 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.'ⁱ He has also promised to give them inward peace, together with outward prosperity. 'The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'^k Again, he has promised to give them spiritual and heavenly blessings, together with the good things of this life. 'Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.'^l 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest mine head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will,' or, I shall, 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'^m Again, God has promised, together with outward blessings, to give a thankful heart, whereby his people may be enabled to give him the glory of what they enjoy. 'When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee.'ⁿ 'Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed.'^o Further, he has promised, not only that he will confer outward good things on his people, but that he

s Psal. cxxviii. 2.

y Psal. ciii. 17.

c 1 Sam. ii. 30.

g Zeph. iii. 20.

! Job xxii. 24—26.

t Deut. xxviii. 4, 5, 12.

z Psal. cii. 28.

d Prov. iii. 17.

h Prov. x. 7.

m Psal. xxiii. 5, 6.

u Psal. i. 3.

a Psal. xlv. 16.

e Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13.

i Chap. x. 22.

n Deut. viii. 10.

x Psal. cxxviii. 3.

b Psal. cxii. 3.

f Isa. lvii. 1.

k Psal. xxxvii. 11.

o Joel ii. 26.

will make them blessings to others, and enable them to lay out what he gives them for their good, to support his cause and gospel in the world, and to relieve those who are in distress. 'I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.'^p 'Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee and unto thine house, thou and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.'^q These promises more especially respect those who are in a prosperous condition in the world.

But there are others which are made to believers, in an afflicted state. Indeed, there is scarcely any affliction to which they are liable, but what has some special promises annexed to it. There are promises made to believers when lying on a sick-bed. 'The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.'^r 'The Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all that hate thee.'^s 'I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.'^t There are promises made to believers, when poor and low in the world. 'I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.'^u There are promises which respect God's giving a full compensation for all the losses which his people have sustained for Christ's sake. 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit life everlasting.'^x 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my name's sake shall find it.'^y There are promises made to believers under oppression. 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.'^z 'In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.'^a 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.'^b There are promises made to believers when reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake. 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.'^c 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.'^d There are promises made to God's people, when they are in distress, and at present see no way of escape. Thus when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the prison, he had this promise given him: 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.'^e There are promises suited to the condition of God's people, when their lot is cast in perilous times. Thus it is said, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'^f

Now, there are several mercies which God has promised to his people, under the various afflictions to which they are exposed. Sometimes he promises to prevent the afflictions which we are most afraid of. 'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul';^g 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.'^h He has promised to preserve his people from a time of trouble, or defend them in it. 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.'ⁱ 'Thus saith the Lord; although I have cast them afar off among the heathen; and although I have scattered them among the countries; yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.'^k He has promised to moderate their afflictions. 'In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.'^l 'Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee, for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will not I leave thee wholly unpunished.'^m He has promised that, if need be,

p Gen. xii. 2.

t Exod. xxiii. 25.

z Psal. xii. 5.

d 1 Pet. iv. 19.

h Job v. 19.

q Deut. xxvi. 11.

u Psal. cxxxii. 15.

a Hos. xiv. 3.

e Jer. xxxiii. 3.

i Gen. xv. 1. k Ezek. xi. 16.

r Psal. xli. 3.

x Matt. xix. 29.

b Psal. lxxviii. 5.

f Isa. xliii. 2.

l Isa. xxvii. 8.

s Deut. vii. 15.

y Chap. x. 39.

c Matt. v. 11, 12.

g Psal. cxxi. 7.

m Jer. xlv. 28.

he will shorten their afflictions. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.'ⁿ 'In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.'^o He has promised his people that he will enable them to bear the afflictions which he lays upon them. 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.'^p He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'^q He has promised to show his people the particular sin which is the cause of their affliction, that they may be humbled for it. 'If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded.'^r He has promised to bring good to them out of their afflictions. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.'^s 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'^t 'I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, that it is my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.'^u Thus concerning the promises which more especially respect outward blessings which God bestows on his people.

2. There are promises contained in scripture which relate more especially to spiritual blessings; and these are of great use to us when we are asking such blessings of God in prayer.

There are promises which relate more especially to the ordinances or means of grace. These are various. Some respect the duty of prayer, and the success which shall follow, in God's giving gracious returns or answers to it. 'He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.'^x 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.'^y 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'^z Another ordinance to which promises are annexed, is meditation about spiritual things. 'Mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.'^a 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.'^b To those also who read the word of God, there are promises made that he will make known his words to them, so that they may understand them. 'Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.'^c There are promises made to those who attend on the public worship of God. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.'^d 'The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.'^e There are promises made to religious fasting on special occasions. 'When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'^f There are promises made to almsgiving. 'The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.'^g 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.'^h 'He that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully. God loveth a cheerful giver, and is able to make all grace abound.'ⁱ &c. There are promises made to believers when they appear in behalf of truth, at times when it is opposed and perverted, that it shall not be run down, nor they confounded or put to silence by its enemies. 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist.'^k There are promises made to the religious and strict observance and

n Psal. cxxv. 3.

r Job xxxvi. 8, 9.

x Psal. xci. 15.

b Josh. i. 8.

f Matt. vi. 17.

o Mark xiii. 19, 20.

s Isa. xxvii. 9.

y Jer. xxix. 12, 13.

c Prov. i. 23.

g Prov. xi. 25. h Eccl. xi. 1.

p Psal. xxxvii. 24.

t Psal. xcvii. 11.

z Psal. l. 15.

d Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9.

i 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, 8.

q 2 Cor. xii. 9.

u Zech. xiii. 9.

a Prov. xiv. 22.

e Psal. cxxviii. 5.

k Luke xxi. 15.

sanctification of the Lord's day. 'Blessed is the man that doth this; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.'¹

Again, there are promises in scripture which respect God's giving his people special grace, together with the joy, peace, and comfort which flow from it; and these will be of great use to them, in order to their engaging aright in the duty of prayer. There are promises of the grace of faith; and promises made to that grace. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'^m 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'ⁿ There are promises of the grace of repentance. 'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'^o 'Ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.'^p There are promises of love to God. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.'^q 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.'^r 'Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.'^s 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.'^t There are promises of an holy filial fear of God. 'I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'^u 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.'^x Obedience to God's commands, which is an indispensable duty, is also considered as a promised blessing. 'Thou shalt return, and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.'^y Moreover, as there are promises of the graces of the Spirit, so the comforts which flow thence are also promised. Thus it is said, 'I, even I am he that comforteth you.'^z 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,'^a &c. In particular, there are promises of peace of conscience; which is a great branch of those spiritual comforts which God gives his people ground to expect. Thus it is said, 'I will restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.'^b 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.'^c Again, God has promised a good hope of eternal life. 'Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.'^d 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.'^e Further, God has promised spiritual joy to his people. 'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.'^f 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'^g

Here we shall consider a believer, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, as depressed and bowed down in his spirit, and hardly able to speak a word to him in his own behalf. Thus the psalmist says, 'I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak.'^h We shall consider also how he may receive great advantage from those promises which he will find in the word of God. Thus, when he complains of the wickedness, hardness, and perverseness of his heart; God gives him these promises: 'I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh;'ⁱ and, 'Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'^k Again, when a believer is sensible of his ignorance, or,

1 Isa. lvi. 2.

p Ezek. xx. 43.

t 2 Thess. iii. 5.

z Isa. li. 12.

d 2 Thess. ii. 16.

h Psal. lxxvii. 3, 4.

m John vi. 37.

q Gal. v. 22.

u Jer. xxxii. 39, 40.

a Chap. xl. 1, 2.

e Rom. xv. 4.

i Ezek. xi. 19.

n Eph. ii. 8.

r 2 Tim. i. 7.

x Hos. iii. 5.

b Chap. lvii. 18, 19.

f Psal. lxiv. 10.

k Jer. xxiii. 29.

o Rom. xi. 26.

s Rom. v. 5

y Deut. xxx. 8.

c Chap. xxvii. 3.

g Psal. xcvi. 11, 12.

at least, that his knowledge of divine truths bears no proportion to the means of grace which he has been favoured with, and that he is often destitute of spiritual wisdom to direct his way, and to carry him through the difficulties he often meets with as to his temporal or spiritual affairs; there are promises suited to this case: 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.'¹ 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'^m Again, if believers complain of the weakness of their memories, that they cannot retain the truths of God when they hear them; Christ has promised that the Holy Ghost shall 'teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance.'ⁿ Further, if they complain of their unthankfulness, or that they have not hearts disposed to praise God for the mercies they receive; God gives them these promises: 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.'^o 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.'^p Further, there are many who are not altogether destitute of hope that they have the truth of grace, but yet are filled with trouble, apprehending that they do not make those advances in grace which they ought, but seem to be at a stand; and they reckon their state little better than if going backward, and they dread the consequences. Now such may take encouragement from those promises which respect a believer's growing in grace. 'Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.'^q 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.'^r And if they complain of their unprofitableness under the means of grace, and of not receiving any spiritual advantage by the various dispensations of providence which they are under; there is a promise adapted to their case: 'Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.'^s Again, are they afraid that they shall fall away, after having made a long profession of religion? There is a promise which our Saviour himself took encouragement from, though never liable to any fear of this nature, which a believer may apply to himself, as affording relief against these fears and discouragements: 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.'^t And there is another which is more directly applicable to this case: 'Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'^u And if the believer has fallen, and, at the same time, is afraid that he shall never be able to rise again, and recover what he has lost, there is another promise: 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints.'^x God also says, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'^y Again, if a believer be under divine desertion, which he may be, and yet be kept from apostasy; if he is mourning after the Lord, and earnestly desiring that he would return to him; he may take encouragement from that promise: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.'^z And, 'Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together. For I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.'^a Again, is he cast down under a sense of the guilt of sin, and afraid of the punishment which will follow? There are many promises in the word of God which respect the forgiveness of sin. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.'^b 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'^c 'I.

1 Prov. ii. 3—6.

p Psal. cxl. 13.

t Psal. xvi. 8.

z Psal. xlii. 5.

m James i. 5.

q Job viii. 7.

u 1 Cor. i. 8.

a Jer. xxxi. 13, 14.

n John xiv. 26.

r Isa. xl. 29, 31.

x Psal. xxxvii. 24, 28.

b Psal. ciii. 3.

o Isa. xlvii. 91.

s Isa. xlviii. 17.

y Heb. xii. 5.

c Psal. cxxx. 4

even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' ^d Finally, is a believer afraid of the last enemy, death; by reason of the fear of which 'he is all his life-time subject to bondage?' There are promises suited to his case. 'This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.' ^e 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' ^f 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.' ^g Thus we have considered the promises of God as suited to every condition, and, consequently, as affording matter of encouragement to us in drawing nigh to him in prayer.

V. Those reproofs for sins committed, and threatenings which are contained in the word of God, as a means to deter from committing them, may be improved for our direction in prayer. We are induced by these reproofs and threatenings to hate sin, beg strength to subdue and mortify it, and deprecate the wrath and judgments of God. We are also led by them to see our desert of punishment, while we confess ourselves to be sinners, and to bless God that he has not inflicted it upon us; especially if he has given us ground of hope that he has delivered us from the condemnation which was due to us for sin. Moreover, the reproofs of sin and threatenings against it contained in the word of God will be of use to us in prayer, as we are led by them to have an awful sense of the holiness and justice of God, and to draw nigh to him with fear and trembling, lest we should provoke his wrath by our unbecoming behaviour in his presence, and so bring on ourselves a curse instead of a blessing.

VI. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as it contains many examples of the performance of this duty in a right manner by the saints, whose graces, and the manner in which they have drawn nigh to God, are proposed for our imitation. Thus we read of Jacob's wrestling with God, and of his great importunity. It is said, 'He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him.' ^h This refers to what is mentioned in Gen. xxxii. 26, 28. There 'the angel,' that is, Christ, says, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh;' as if he had said, 'Cease thy importunity, which thou hast maintained to the breaking of the day; during which time I have given thee no encouragement that I will grant thy request.' Jacob now persists in his resolution, and says, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;' that is, 'I will not leave off importuning thee, till thou givest me a gracious answer.' Our Saviour then says, 'As a prince hast thou power with God,' that is, with me, 'and with men,' that is, with Esau thy brother, 'and hast prevailed;' so that he shall do thee no hurt, but his heart shall be turned towards thee. ⁱ Again, we read of Abraham's humility in prayer. He says, 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.' ^k 'Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.' ^l We also read of David's sincerity, 'Attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips.' ^m We likewise read of Hezekiah's addressing himself to God with tears in his sickness. Having done so, he immediately received a gracious answer; and when he had recovered, he gave praise to God: ⁿ 'The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. The father to the children shall make known thy truth.' ^o Again, we have an instance of Jonah's faith in prayer, when his disobedience to the divine command had brought him into the utmost distress. 'Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.' ^p We have also an instance of Daniel drawing nigh to God with an uncommon reverence and awful fear of his divine Majesty, and an account of the manner in which he addresses himself to him, with confession of those sins which Israel had been guilty of. 'I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and committed

d Isa. xliii. 25.

h Hosea xii. 4.

m Psal. xvii. 1.

e Heb. ii. 15; Psal. xlviii. 14.

i Gen. xxxii. 28.

n Isa. xxxviii. 3, 5.

f Psal. xxiii. 4.

k Gen. xviii. 27.

o Verse 19.

g Psal. xxxvii. 37.

l Verse 30.

p Jonah ii. 2, 4.

iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.'^q We have this humble confession and supplication continued to the nineteenth verse; and then an account of the success of it, in the gracious answer which God sent him by an angel from heaven. We also read of Joshua's interceding for Israel, when 'he fell upon his face before the ark of the Lord, with his clothes rent;' ^r and we have the plea that he made use of, 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name?' ^s We have also an instance of fervency in Moses, when pleading for the people after they had worshipped the golden calf. He prefers God's glory to his own happiness; and had rather have no name in the church, or be 'blotted out of the book' which God had 'written,' than that his 'wrath' should 'wax hot against Israel, to consume them.' ^t There are many other instances mentioned in scripture; which, for brevity's sake, I pass over. Indeed, the whole book of Lamentations is of use to direct us in prayer, under pressing afflictions, either feared or undergone; and the book of Psalms is a directory for prayer to the believer, suited to every condition which he may be supposed to be in, and of praise for mercies of all kinds, whether temporal or spiritual. And the same may be said of many other parts of scripture.

Practical Inferences from the Word of God, being a Rule of Direction for Prayer.

From what has been said concerning the word of God being a direction to us in prayer, several inferences may be drawn. First, as reading the scriptures in our families and closets is a great help to raise our affections, and bring us into a praying frame; so the application of scripture doctrines and examples to our own case, will supply us with fit matter and expressions upon all occasions, when we draw nigh to God in this duty.—Again, the pretence of some that they know not how to pray, or that they cannot pray without a prescribed form, arises, for the most part, from an unacquaintedness with the scriptures, or a neglect to study them, to answer this end.—Again, since the word of God is a directory for prayer, we ought not to affect modes of expression, or human strains of rhetoric, which are not deduced from scripture or agreeable to it; but, on the other hand, we are to use such a simplicity of style, and spirituality of expression, as we find contained in scripture,—especially in those parts of it which are more directly subservient to this duty.—Further, it will be of very great use for us sometimes, in the course of our reading scripture, especially in private, to turn what we read into prayer, though it do not contain in-itself the form of a prayer. Thus when we read of the presumptuous sins committed by some, and the visible marks of God's displeasure which followed, we ought to lift up our hearts to him, that he would keep us from them, or, if we have reason to charge ourselves as guilty of them, that we may be humbled and obtain forgiveness from him. And when we read the excellent characters of some of the saints in scripture, we ought to pray that God would enable us to be followers of them in their excellencies; or when, in some parts of scripture, believers are represented as praying for particular mercies, we ought to lift up our hearts to God for the same. Our pursuing this practice will be a means, not only to furnish us with matter and proper expressions in prayer, but to excite our affections when we engage in this duty, in those stated times which we set apart for it.

The Lord's Prayer a Special Rule of Direction for Prayer.

We are now to consider that there is a special rule of direction contained in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer. This prayer is mentioned by only two of the evangelists, Matthew ^u and Luke.^x Though there is a perfect harmony between their reports of the prayer, as there is between all other parts of scripture, as to the matter or sense of the words; yet it is obvious to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to the mode of expression,—particularly in the fourth and fifth petitions.

q Dan. ix. 4, 5.

t Exod. xxxii. 10, 11, 31, 32.

r Joshua vii. 6.

u Matt. vi. 8—13.

s Verse 9.

x Luke xi. 2—4.

Nor is this difference only in the translation, which is sufficiently just; but it is in the original; and it would not have existed, had the Lord's prayer been designed for a form of prayer. Thus in the fourth petition, Luke teaches us to say, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' while in Matthew, it is expressed, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Here there are different ideas contained in the respective words: as is very common when the same sense is in substance laid down in different parts of scripture. 'Give us this day our daily bread,' contains a petition for what we want at present; and, 'Give us this, day by day,' implies that our wants will daily recur upon us, so that it will every day be necessary to desire a supply from God. Hence, if both accounts of the petition be compared together, we are directed to pray, 'Lord, give us the blessings which we want at present; and let these wants be daily supplied, as we shall stand in need of a supply from thee.' Again, in the fifth petition, Luke directs us to pray, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' while, in Matthew, the expression is very different, namely, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' Again, the evangelist Luke leaves out the doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;' which Matthew adds. Hence, it may be inferred, I conceive, that our Saviour did not design, in dictating this prayer to his people, that they should confine themselves to the mode of expression used in it without the least variation; for in that case, doubtless, the two evangelists would have laid it down in the very same words. But he rather designed it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer.

I am sensible it will be objected, that the preface which Luke prefixes to it, is, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father,' &c., which seems to intimate that these very words should be used, and no other. We reply, that the evangelist Matthew, who, beyond dispute, laid down this prayer more fully than Luke does, says, by way of preface to it, 'After this manner pray ye.' Now, these words seem to be an intimation that it was designed to be rather a directory as to the matter of prayer, than a form of words to be used without the least variation. Hence, I cannot but think that what Luke says, 'When you pray, say,' &c., imports nothing else but, 'Pray after this manner.'

That our Saviour principally designed this prayer as a directory respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than as a form, further appears from the fact that it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, particularly, confession of sin, or thankful acknowledgment of mercies. I say, it does not contain these explicitly, but only implicitly, as a deduction, or inference from the petitions themselves. Thus our saying, 'Forgive us our debts,' or sins, supposes that we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. Nor can it be denied that there are some expressions which contain matter of thanksgiving. Thus our saying, 'Hallowed be thy name,' implies a thankful acknowledgment of all those instances in which God has sanctified his name, as well as a desire that he would sanctify it: it is as if we should say, 'Thou hast, in the various dispensations of thy providence, and in all thine holy institutions, set forth the glory of thy perfections, that thou mayest be adored and magnified by thy creatures. This we own with thankfulness, at the same time that we desire the continuance of it.' Again, when we pray, 'Give us daily bread,' we, in effect, acknowledge the bounty of his providence, whence we receive all the comforts of life, and his having hitherto supplied our wants. The Lord's prayer, then, is an implicit direction for thanksgiving. But if our Saviour had designed that it should be a perfect form of words, to be used without varying in the least from them, he would have given us some more full and direct account of what sins we are to acknowledge, and what mercies we are to thank him for. Such an account is more plainly contained in some other scriptures than it can be supposed to be in this prayer. Hence the prayer seems to be principally designed as a rule for our direction what we are to ask for, or how that part of prayer which includes petition, ought to be performed agreeably to the mind and will of God. Moreover, there is no explicit mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray; nor of his obedience, sufferings, or intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, and to which our faith is to have a great regard. These things, therefore, are to be supplied by what we find in other parts of scripture, all which, taken to-

gether, give us a perfect directory for prayer; though neither this prayer, nor any other used in scripture, sufficiently appears to have been designed as a form of words which we are to confine ourselves to, without the least variation.

It is observed in the latter of the Answers under consideration, that the Lord's prayer is not only for direction as a pattern, but may be used as a prayer, provided it be done in a right manner. Now, it is granted that the Lord's prayer is of use, as a pattern and rule for our direction, in common with all other prayers contained in scripture; but the main difficulty is, whether our Saviour designed that his disciples, and the church in all following ages, should confine themselves to the words of the prayer, so far as that the mode of expression should not be in the least altered, or any thing added to the petitions contained in it, how agreeable soever to the sense and words of scripture. Now, this does not seem to have been his intention, As it will not be denied by any, that every one of the petitions contained in the prayer may be interspersed and joined with other petitions; so, when this has been done, or at least the sense of the petitions expressed in other words, it will be very hard to prove that it is absolutely necessary that the petitions should be recollected and prayed over again, in the same method in which they are laid down in the prayer, merely for the sake of our making use of it as a form. It will be especially hard to prove this, if the making use of the prayer as a form is not expressly commanded by our Saviour; and that it is not so commanded, appears from what was formerly observed, that these words, 'When you pray, say, Our Father,' &c. imply nothing else but, 'Pray after this manner.' I would be very far, however, from censuring or blaming the practice observed by many of the reformed churches, who conclude their extempore or premeditated prayers with it, provided it be done with understanding, reverence, and suitable acts of faith. For any other petition contained in scripture may be made use of by us in prayer; not only as to its sense, but in its express words. The principal thing which I would militate against, is not so much the using of the words, as doing this in a formal way, supposing that the mere recital of them does, as it were, sanctify our other prayers; which, though very agreeable to the sense of the Lord's prayer, are, as some suppose, so incomplete, that they will hardly be regarded by God without it. Moreover, I cannot but conclude the Papists highly to blame, who think that the frequent repetition of it, though in a tongue unknown to the common people, is not only necessary, but in some measure meritorious. And the practice of some ignorant superstitious persons, who think that it may be made use of as a charm, and that the words of it may be repeated, as the Jews of old did their phylacteries, as a means to drive away evil spirits, is not only to be disapproved, but is a vile instance of profaneness, very remote from the design of our Saviour in giving it.

THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CLXXXVIII. *Of how many parts doth the Lord's prayer consist?*

ANSWER. The Lord's prayer consists of three parts, a preface, petitions, and a conclusion.

QUESTION CLXXXIX. *What doth the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?*

ANSWER. The preface of the Lord's prayer, contained in these words, "Our Father, which art in heaven," teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein, with reverence, and all other childlike dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension; as also to pray with and for others.

In this prayer we are taught to begin our prayers with a preface, and therein to make an explicit mention of the name of God, and some of his divine perfections. The preface to this prayer is contained in these words: 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' It shows us that we are to draw near to God with reverence, and suitable apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and other divine perfections,

and with an holy confidence of his fatherly goodness. The phrase, 'Our Father,' shows us also that we are to pray with and for others; and instructs us to begin our prayers with some expressions of reverence, agreeable to the nature of the duty in which we are engaged, whereby we express the sense we have of his essential or relative glory. We have various instances in scripture in which God's people, when addressing themselves to him, made mention of his glorious names, titles, and attributes, in variety of expressions. Thus David, in his psalms, which contain the matter and form of prayers, sometimes begins with the mention of the name of God, to whom they are directed. He says, for example, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us,'^y &c. And elsewhere, 'O God, thou art my God.'^z Sometimes, also, he makes mention of his name Jehovah; which we translate Lord. Thus he says, 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath,'^a &c. 'I will love thee,' O Lord, my strength.'^b 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!'^c Solomon begins his prayer at the consecration of the temple, 'Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or earth beneath; who keep-est covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.'^d Ezra begins his prayer, 'O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.'^e Daniel expresses himself thus, in the preface to his prayer, 'O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.'^f These are all expressions which denote reverence and adoration; and, along with other expressions of a similar nature, they are of use for our direction, as to the preface or beginning of our prayers to God. But the preface to the Lord's prayer is somewhat different; and affords us some particular directions.

1. It teaches us to address ourselves to God as a Father. This relation includes something common to mankind in general; and, in respect to this, we are to adore him as our Creator, our owner, and benefactor, 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being.'^g Thus the prophet says, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?'^h Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'He formeth the spirit of man within him;'ⁱ on which account he is called, 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,'^k and, 'the Father of spirits.'^l—Again, God's being a Father to his people, sometimes denotes that external covenant relation which they stand in to him, as a people called by his name, favoured with the means of grace, and, as such, the objects of his care and goodness; whom he is pleased to govern by laws given by special revelation from heaven, whom he encourages to wait on him in those ordinances in which they may hope for his presence, and to whom, as persons who give themselves up to him by faith, he promises all saving blessings. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures in which God says, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.'^m 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'ⁿ 'Wilt thou not from this time cry to me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?'^o—Further, the relation which God stands in to his people, as a Father, is sometimes taken in the highest sense, as implying discriminating grace, or special love, which he is pleased to extend to the heirs of salvation. Thus he is called so by right of redemption. Accordingly, Christ is styled, 'the everlasting Father,'^p as being the Head and Redeemer of his people. And the church says, 'Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.'^q And believers are called his children by regeneration; in which respect they are said to be 'born of God,'^r and to be 'made partakers of a divine,'^s that is, an holy and spiritual 'nature,' which had its rise from God, when he was pleased to stamp his image upon them, consisting in holiness and righteousness. They are also called the children of God by adoption. Thus he is said to have 'predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself';^t and they are said to 'receive the adoption of sons';^u and, as such, they have a right to the inheritance of children.^x

y Psal. lxxvii. 1.

c Psal. viii. 1.

g Acts xvii. 28.

l Heb. xii. 9.

p Isa. ix. 6.

t Ephes. i. 5.

z Psal. lxxiii. 1.

d 1 Kings viii. 23.

h Mal. ii. 10.

m Exod. iv. 22.

q Chap. lxxiii. 16.

u Gal. iv. 5.

a Psal. xxxviii. 1.

e Ezra ix. 6.

i Zech. xii. 1.

n Isa. i. 2.

r John i. 13.

x Rom. viii. 17, compared with Col. i. 12.

b Psal. xviii. 1.

f Dan. ix. 4.

k Numb. xvi. 22.

o Jer. iii. 4.

s 2 Pet. i. 4.

These various senses in which God is said to be a Father to man, may serve for our direction when we style him, 'Our Father,' in prayer. Unregenerate persons, when they pray to God, can ascend no higher than what is contained in their relation to him as a God of nature, and of providence. They are obliged to adore him for the blessings which they have received from him as the effects of common bounty, which include all the blessings belonging to this life, together with his patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, in delaying to inflict the punishment which sin deserves. Hence, when they say, 'Our Father,' they acknowledge that they derive their being from him. Though they cannot lay claim to the benefits of Christ's redemption, yet they confess their obligations to God as their Creator, and consider him as having given them souls capable of spiritual blessings, and themselves as daily receiving the good things of this life from him, and as dependent on him for those things which tend to the comfort and support of life. They also stand in need of those blessings which are suited to the nature of the soul, and consequently beg that they may not remain destitute of the things which may conduce to their everlasting welfare. Hence, they may use the psalmist's words, 'Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.'^y

As for those who are God's children by an external covenant-relation, there is something more implied than merely their being creatures; for, in considering that relation, they are led to adore him for the discoveries which he has made in the gospel of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who calls and invites sinners to come to him, and encourages them to hope that those who are enabled to do so in a right manner, he will in no wise cast out. Hence, when they call upon God in prayer, as their Father, they in effect, say, "Lord, we cannot conclude ourselves to be thy children as redeemed, effectually called, and sanctified; nor can we lay claim to the inheritance laid up for thy saints in heaven; yet we are encouraged to wait on thee in the ordinances of thine appointment, and to hope for thy special presence in them, whereby they may be made effectual for our salvation. We are, indeed, destitute of special grace, and cannot conclude that we have a right to the saving blessings of the covenant; yet, through thy great goodness, we still enjoy the means of grace. We have not been admitted to partake of Christ's fulness, nor to eat of the bread of life; yet we are thankful for those blessings of thy house which thou art pleased to continue to us; and since thou still includest us in the number of those who are thy children as favoured with the gospel, we humbly take leave, on this account, to call thee our Father, to wait and hope for thy salvation, and to continue to implore that grace from thee which will give us a right to the best of blessings that we stand in need of."

As for those who are God's children in the highest sense, by redemption, regeneration, and adoption, they may draw nigh to him with an holy boldness. For they have, as the apostle expresses it, 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father;' and have reason to adore him for privileges of the highest nature which he has conferred upon them, and to encourage themselves that he will bestow upon them all the blessings they stand in need of as to this or a better world. Such may draw nigh to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and their interest in it; and they ought to take notice of that goodness and improve it, in order to their drawing nigh to him in a right manner in prayer, as well as to induce them to behave themselves, in the whole course of their conversation, as those who are taken into the honourable relation of being his children. They ought to have admiring thoughts of God, that they, who were by nature strangers and enemies to him, should be admitted to partake of this inestimable privilege; as the apostle says, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!'^z They should also take encouragement to hope that he will hear and answer their prayers, though very imperfect, so far as his doing so may tend to his glory and their real advantage. Thus our Saviour says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?'^a

Do we pray for spiritual blessings, such as the increase of grace, strength against corruption, and to be kept from temptation, or from falling by it? We have ground to conclude that these shall be granted us, inasmuch as they are purchased for us by Christ, promised in the covenant of grace, and secured to us, as we have the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit in our hearts, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And when we pray for temporal blessings, we have reason to hope that they shall be granted, if they be necessary for us; since our Saviour says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things.'^b

In particular, our being the children of God ought to excite in us those childlike dispositions which are agreeable to this relation, not only when we draw nigh to God in prayer, but in the whole conduct of our lives. One childlike disposition is humble reverence. This is not only becoming those who have an interest in God's love, and a liberty of access into his presence, with hope of acceptance in his sight; but it is what we are obliged to as his peculiar people, and is a branch of that honour which is due to him as our God and Father. Thus he says by the prophet, 'A son honoureth his father;'^c and he here intimates, that humble reverence of him as their Father, is the character and disposition of those who stand in the relation of children to him. And the apostle argues from the less to the greater, when he says, 'We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits?'^d—Another childlike disposition is patience under rebukes. This we are to exercise, when we consider our proneness to go astray, whereby not only do we deserve rebukes, but they are rendered necessary; and especially when we consider that they flow from love, and are designed for our good; as the apostle says, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'^e—Another childlike disposition is being grieved for our Father's frowns; especially that we have incurred his displeasure by our misbehaviour towards him. This disposition includes a readiness to confess our faults, and a carefulness to avoid them for the future.—Again, contentment with the provision of our Father's house, whatever it be, is another childlike disposition. We shall never, indeed, have the least cause to complain of scarcity; for, as the returning prodigal in the parable said, even 'the hired servants of his father had bread enough, and to spare.'^f It can hardly be supposed that he who is at the fountain-head can perish for thirst. Yet, though we are not straitened in God, we are often straitened in our own bowels, through the weakness of our faith, when we are not inclined to receive what God holds forth to us in the gospel; and then we are discontented and uneasy, while the blame lies at our own door. If, however, we behaved ourselves as the children of such a Father, we should not only be pleased with the fulness of grace which is in Christ, but constantly adore and live upon it; and whether he is pleased to give us more or less of the blessings of common providence, we should learn, 'in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.'^g—Again, obedience to a father's commands, without disputing his authority, or his right to govern us, is another childlike disposition. Thus, when we draw nigh to God as to our Father, we are to express a readiness to do whatever he requires. And by acting thus, we not only approve ourselves subjects under a law, but, as the apostle styles it, 'obedient children,' as being 'holy in all manner of conversation.'^h—Another disposition of children is, that they have a fervent zeal for their father's honour, and cannot bear to hear him reproached without the highest resentment. Thus the children of God, how much soever they may be concerned about their own affairs, when injuriously treated by the world, are always ready to testify their utmost dislike of every thing which reflects dishonour on God, or his ways.—Another childlike disposition is love; which the relation of a father engages to. Thus when we draw nigh to God as to our Father, we express our love to him; and this is founded in his divine excellencies, which render him the object of the highest delight and esteem.—Again, he who has a childlike disposition, retains a grateful sense of the obligations he is under to his father. Thus we ought to be duly sensible of all the favours which

^b Matt. vi. 32.
^f Luke xv. 17.

^c Mal. i. 6.
^g Phil. iv. 11.

^d Heb. xii. 9.
^h 1 Pet. i. 14, 15.

^e Verse 6.

we have received from God, which are more than can be numbered. The contrary to this disposition is reckoned the basest ingratitude and disingenuousness, altogether unbecoming the temper of children. Thus Moses says to Israel, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? is not he thy father who hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?'ⁱ A believer's obligations to God are so very great, that he cannot look back upon his former state, or consider what he was, how vile and unworthy of any regard from him, how miserable and unable to help himself when he first had compassion on him, without seeing himself under the strongest engagements to be entirely and for ever his. This is a becoming behaviour towards such a Father.—Further, love to all who are related to us as children of the same father, is another childlike disposition. Thus our love to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, is a temper becoming the children of God. Indeed, it is no other than loving God in them. We behold his image stamped upon them; and in loving them, we express the high esteem we have for regenerating grace, whereby God is denominated our common Father; and we, being acted by a principle common to all, are obliged and inclined to love as brethren. Thus they who love God are induced to love his children. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;'^k and he adds, 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.'^l Thus concerning our drawing nigh to God, as to a Father, as we are taught to do in the Lord's prayer.

2. We are directed in the preface of this prayer, to draw nigh to God as being in heaven. Heaven is the most glorious part of the frame of nature, in which his power, wisdom, and goodness are eminently displayed, and which he designed to be an eternal habitation for the best of creatures, to whom he would discover more of his glory than to any others. In this respect, it is called his 'throne.'^m

Now, God's being in heaven should lead us to have high and awful thoughts of the majesty and greatness of God, whom all the hosts of heaven worship with the utmost reverence, being satisfied with the immense treasure of his goodness. We therefore take occasion to admire his infinite condescension, that he will look upon creatures here below. Thus Solomon, in his prayer, says, 'Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee;'ⁿ will he therefore look down upon those, who are so mean, deformed, and destitute of his image, as we are, who dwell in houses of clay, and deserve to be banished out of his sight?—Again, God's being in heaven should be improved by us to teach us humility and modesty, in our conceptions and discourse concerning God and divine things. It is but a little that we know of the affairs of the upper world, and of the manner in which God is pleased to manifest himself to his saints and angels there; and we know much less of his divine perfections, which the inhabitants of heaven adore, being sensible of the infinite distance they stand at from him, as creatures, on which account they cannot comprehend the Almighty, or find him out to perfection; and shall we pretend to search out the secrets of his wisdom, or express ourselves in prayer as though we were speaking to one who is our equal, or could fathom the infinite depths of his unsearchable counsels? Solomon's advice may be well adapted to this case, 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.'^o We are not to think that we may say what we please, or be 'rash' and inconsiderate in what we say, when we are 'before the Lord;' 'for he is in heaven.' 'Therefore our words should be few;' that is, we should not think that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon the multitude of our words; or if we speak more or less to God, our expressions ought not to be bold, rash, hasty, or inconsiderate, but should be framed with decency and reverence, becoming those who are speaking to the Majesty of heaven,—Further, God's being in heaven should put us upon meditating frequently on the glory of the heavenly state, as those who hope at last to be joined with that happy and numerous assembly who are in God's immediate presence in heaven. Hence,

i Deut. xxxii. 6.
m Acts vii. 49.

k 1 John v. 1.
n 1 Kings viii. 27.

l Chap. iii. 14.
o Eccl. v. 2.

our conversation should be there ; and we should profess ourselves to be sojourners on earth, seeking a better country, looking and waiting for the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour, and hoping that, when he comes, he will receive us to heaven, where our hearts are at present, as our treasure is there.

3. We are, in the preface to the Lord's prayer, farther taught that it is our duty to pray with and for others. When we say, 'Our Father,' we signify our relation to, and concern for, all the members of Christ's mystical body. Hence, if we do not join with others in prayer, we are to have them upon our hearts, who are the objects of Christ's special love and care. We have thus a sympathy with all those who are exposed to the same wants and miseries as ourselves ; we take much delight in considering them as subjects of the same common Lord, joining in the same profession with ourselves ; and we desire and hope concerning them, that they and we shall be glorified together.—Moreover, if we join with others in prayer, so that the whole assembly make their supplications by one who is their mouth to God, we practise what is called social worship. It is hence our duty to pray with as well as for others. Now, we must take heed that nothing be contained in united prayer but what the whole assembly may join in, as expressive of their faith, desires, or experiences ; otherwise there cannot be such beautiful harmony as the nature and design of the duty we are jointly engaged in calls for. Besides, in all social or united prayers, the petitions are to be adapted to the particular case of every one who addresses himself to God, how numerous soever the worshipping assembly may be ; and therefore we are obliged to make use of that mode of expression, in which we are taught to say, 'Our Father.'

Thus our Saviour directs us how we should begin our prayers to God. And as the direction he gives us ought to be reduced to practice, I shall give a summary account of what is contained in the preface to the Lord's prayer. We shall thus be furnished with matter for our addressing ourselves to God in prayer, in a way agreeable to what is taught in that preface, when we come into his presence with such a frame of spirit as the importance of the duty requires. We are to express ourselves, then, to this effect: "O our God, we desire to draw nigh to thee with a becoming reverence, and an awful sense of thine infinite perfections. When we consider thee as a jealous God, and ourselves as sinful, guilty creatures, we might well be afraid to come before thee ; but thou hast encouraged us to approach thy presence as to a Father, in and through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and therefore we come with an humble boldness before thy throne of grace, confessing that though we are called thy children, we have been very undutiful and rebellious against thee, and therefore unworthy of that relation, or of the inheritance which thou hast laid up for those whom thou hast ordained to eternal life. Thou, O Lord, hast established thy throne in the heavens, where there is an innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who all behold thy face, and are made completely blessed in thine immediate presence. As for us, we dwell in houses of clay ; but we earnestly beg that we may be made meet for that happy society, and then admitted into it, that we may worship thee in a more perfect manner than we are capable of doing in this imperfect state. May all the powers and faculties of our souls be renewed, and influenced by thy Holy Spirit, that we may have our conversation in heaven, whilst we are here below, and, in all things, may be enabled to approve ourselves thy children ; have a constant sense of duty, and of the manifold obligations thou hast laid us under, that we may love thee, delight in thee, and submit to thee in all things ; and have a fervent zeal for the honour of thy name as becomes thy children, that we, together with all thy faithful servants, may be under thy safe protection here, and be received to thy glory hereafter."

THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXC. *What do we pray for in the first petition ?*

ANSWER. In the first petition, which is, "Hallowed be thy name," acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honour God aright, we pray that God would, by his grace, enable and incline us, and others, to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by, and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed; that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonourable to him; and, by his overruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to his own glory.

HAVING explained the preface to the Lord's prayer, we are next to consider its petitions. These are six; and are laid down in the following method. First, we are taught to pray for what concerns God's glory. This is the highest and most valuable end; and therefore ought first to be prayed for. It is the subject of the three first petitions. Secondly, we are directed to pray for what respects our own advantage. This is the subject of the three last petitions. In these we are directed to pray for outward blessings, as in the fourth petition; and then for spiritual, without which outward blessings would not afford us any relish or savour, or render us truly happy. These spiritual blessings include forgiveness of sin, which we pray for in the fifth petition; and our being sanctified and delivered from the prevalency of corruption and temptation, together with all the evils to which sin exposes us, and this blessing we pray for in the sixth petition.

What we are more particularly to consider in this Answer, is, what we are taught to pray for in the first petition, which is contained in these words, 'Hallowed be thy name.' By the 'name' of God we are to understand every thing by which he is pleased to make himself known to his creatures. Thus he discovers himself in his divine perfections, which are either essential or personal, absolute or relative; and in his glorious titles, as the Lord of Hosts, the God and Rock of Israel, the Hope of Israel, the God that cannot lie, the Father of mercies, the God of all grace and glory, the Preserver of man; which have all a tendency to raise in us the highest veneration for him, and esteem of him. He has also made himself known by his ordinances, word, and works. These are the subject of this petition; and when we pray that they may be sanctified, we are to understand, not that they may be made holy, but that the holiness and glory of them may be demonstrated by him, and that we may be enabled to adore and magnify him in a becoming manner. Now, the name of God may be said to be sanctified in some respects by himself, and in other respects by his people.

I. We pray that God would sanctify his name, that is, demonstrate the glory of it, or proclaim it and make it visible to the world, so as to excite that adoration and esteem which is due to him. His name, indeed, has been eminently glorified in all ages, in the various methods of his providence and grace; whereby his power, wisdom, and goodness have been illustrated in the eyes of angels and men; and, in all his works, he has appeared to be a God of infinite holiness. We therefore pray that he would continue to glorify these perfections, and enable us to improve the displays of them to our spiritual advantage.

This is a subject of the highest importance, without which we cannot give to God the glory due to his name. Hence, as praise is joined with prayer, it is necessary for us to take a view of the various ways by which God has manifested the glory of his holiness. We might here consider how he did this in creating man at first, without the least blemish or disposition in his nature to sin, and in stamping his own image upon him, consisting principally in holiness, which was the greatest internal beauty and ornament that he could be endowed with. But what we shall principally consider, is, how the holiness of God is demonstrated in his dealings with fallen man. His suffering sin to enter into the world, was not inconsistent with the holiness of his nature. For his providence, as was formerly observed, was not conversant about it, by bringing any under a natural necessity of sinning; and therefore there is not the least ground to charge him with being the author of

sin. We now proceed to show how the holiness of God was glorified in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, and in the methods he took in order to his recovery.

1. The holiness of God was glorified, or he sanctified his great name, in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, before he gave him any hope of salvation. It cannot be supposed that man's rebellion against God, and apostasy from him, should not be highly resented by him. Accordingly, we read of his proceeding as a judge against the rebel, charging his crime upon him, and passing sentence according to the demerit of his sin. And all the miseries to which we are exposed, either in this life or in that which is to come, are the result of the display of his holiness, as a sin-revenging Judge. As soon as our first parents sinned against him, he charged their guilt on their consciences, and filled them with a dread of his wrath. Hence proceeded an inclination to flee from his presence; and when they heard the voice of the Lord coming to call them to an account for what they had done, they were afraid. This is God's usual method in dealing with sinful creatures. He first convinces them of sin by the law, and awakens the conscience, so that his terrors are set in array against it round about; and then he speaks good and comfortable words by the gospel. He thus sanctifies his name, and discovers his infinite hatred of all sin.

2. God glorifies his holiness in the method he has taken to deliver man from that guilt and misery under which he had brought himself. The terms of reconciliation and salvation were such as tended to secure the glory of his justice; and therefore he insisted on a satisfaction to be given, without making the least abatement of any part of the debt of punishment which was due for our sin. Accordingly, 'he spared not his own Son,'^p but delivered him over unto death, and obliged him to drink the bitterest part of that cup which was most formidable to nature, and which, had it been possible, he would fain have been excused from drinking. Hence, Christ is represented, by one of the evangelists, as praying that God the Father would 'take this cup from him;'^q and by another, that he would 'save him from this hour.'^r Yet he expresses the utmost resignation to the divine will; and, being sensible that his sufferings were an expedient to glorify the holiness of God, he does, as it were, give a check to the voice of nature, and submits to bear the punishment he came into the world to suffer, how terrible soever it might be. Hence, he says, 'Father, glorify thy name;'^s which is as if he had said, 'Take what method is most expedient to demonstrate the glory of thy holiness; let the whole debt be exacted on me; I am willing to pay the utmost farthing.' God then says, by a voice from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again;' that is, 'In every step which has been or shall be taken, in order to the bringing about of the work of redemption, I have hallowed my name, and will do it hereafter.' Thus was God's holiness glorified in finishing transgression, making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and also in the impetration of redemption, by our great Mediator and Surety.

3. God has sanctified his name in all the methods which he has taken in the application of redemption, in the various dispensations of his providence and grace towards his church and people. He has determined that 'if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; if they break his statutes and keep not his commandments; he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;'^t and he does all this in order to manifest the glory of his holiness. Though he is pleased to pardon their iniquity for the sake of Christ's righteousness; yet they shall know by experience that he hates it. Whatever be his designs of grace with respect to his redeemed ones, they shall find that their sin shall not altogether go unpunished; though their punishment is not of the same kind as that which was suffered by Christ, from the hand of vindictive justice demanding satisfaction. Moreover, God has sanctified his name, in his having connected sanctification with salvation. Hence, he has said, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'^u He makes his people first holy, and then happy.

p Rom. viii. 32.

s John xii. 28.

II.

q Mark xiv. 35, 36.

t Psal. lxxxix. 30, 32.

4 H

r John xii. 27.

u Heb. xii. 14.

Every mercy which he bestows, is a motive or inducement to holiness ; and all the ordinances and means of grace are made subservient to this end. Here we may take occasion to observe the various methods whereby God has sanctified his name, in all his dealings with his church, in various ages, both before and since our Saviour's incarnation.

The people whom, under the legal dispensation, he chose out of all the nations of the earth, and called by his name, among whom he designed to magnify his perfections in such a way as argued them to be the peculiar objects of his regard above all others, as he designed to make them high in name, in praise, and in honour, are styled 'an holy people,'^x and elsewhere, 'holiness unto the Lord.'^y The wonderful things which he did for them in destroying their enemies, when he brought them out of the Egyptian bondage, gave them occasion to celebrate his name, as a God 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.'^z The worship which he established among them was such as expressly required holiness, both in heart and in life. And when, at any time, they cast a reproach on his perfections, or defiled and debased his holy institutions, he testified his displeasure against them in the highest degree. Of this we have various instances in the judgments which he executed on particular persons, for not performing with the greatest exactness what he had commanded in things which related to his worship. Thus when Nadab and Abihu 'offered strange fire,' they were 'devoured,' before the Lord, by fire from heaven.'^a When David was bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem, we read that Uzzah put forth his hand to take hold of it to prevent its falling, when shaken by the oxen. This he, doubtless, did with a good design, and it is therefore called an 'error,' rather than a presumptuous sin. Yet it is said, that 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, so that he smote him that he died by it.'^b For what he did was contrary to an express law which God had given, that the sons of Kohath should 'bear the ark, but they should not touch it, or any holy thing' that was covered, 'lest they die.'^c We read, too, that some of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had 'looked into the ark of the Lord, were smitten, so that fifty thousand, and threescore and ten of them died ;'^d for God had forbidden that any should indulge their curiosity, so far as to look on the holy things on pain of death.^e He also threatened the children of Israel with death, if any of these who were not appointed to minister in holy things, came nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, so as to perform that service which they were not sanctified or called to ; since their doing so was reckoned no other than an instance of profaneness. Even if Aaron himself, whose office it was to go into the holiest of all to perform the yearly service, in which he was to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation, presumed to do this at any other time but that day which God had appointed, was to be punished with death.^f—Again, when any thing was brought into the worship of God, contrary to what he had instituted, which was reckoned no other than profaning it, God hallowed his own name, by pouring forth his wrath on those who gave occasion to or complied with it. Thus when Jeroboam set up calves in Bethel and Dan, 'made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi,' 'ordained feasts' like those which God had appointed, and, in many other instances, corrupted his worship, so that the people who followed him were led aside from God, it is said, 'This became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.'^g When 'Ahaz erected an altar, according to the pattern of that which he saw at Damascus, and sacrificed to the gods of the people,' from whom he took the pattern, he brought 'ruin' on himself and his kingdom.^h When Uzziah usurped the priest's office, by offering incense in the temple, God immediately testified his displeasure against him, by 'smiting him with leprosy ;' whereby he was separated from the congregation of the Lord, and rendered unfit to govern his people to the day of his death.ⁱ—Moreover, when holy men, in any instance, have not sanctified God's name in the eyes of the people, he has highly resented their be-

x Deut. xxvi. 19.

y Jer. ii. 3.

z Exod. xv. 11.

a Lev. x. 1, 2.

b 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.

c Numb. iv. 15.

d 1 Sam. vi. 19.

e Numb. iv. 20.

f Lev. xvi. 2.

g 1 Kings xii. 25—33, compared with chap. xiii. 34.

h 2 Kings xvi. 10, compared with

2 Chron. xxviii. 23.

i 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, 20, 21.

baviour. Thus when Moses and Aaron 'spake unadvisedly with their lips,' on which account they are said 'not to have sanctified the name of God at the waters of Meribah,' he told them that therefore they should 'not bring the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, but should die in the wilderness.'^k—Again, as we have many instances of the judgments of God on particular persons, for not sanctifying his name; so we have a public and visible display of his holiness, in his dealings with the whole nation of Israel, after their many revolts from him, when they served other gods, and not only corrupted but laid aside his institutions, and were guilty of vile abominations which were inconsistent with the least pretensions to holiness. God then sanctified his own name, not only by reproving them by the prophets, but by sending the many judgments which were the forerunners of that desolation which they had reason to expect, and afterwards by delivering them into the hands of those who carried them captive, Israel into Assyria, and Judah into Babylon.

Let us now consider how God has sanctified his name, and continues to sanctify it, under the gospel dispensation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head and Saviour of his church, has, in his whole administration, set forth the glory of God's holiness. He came into the world, with a commission from his Father, to engage in the work of our redemption; and accordingly, he is said to have been 'sanctified and sent into it' for this very purpose.^l When he entered on his public ministry, he produced his commission, and gave undeniable proofs that he was the Messiah, the person whom God the Father had 'sealed,' and set over his house, to manage this great affair. Every miracle which he wrought, was a divine testimony for the confirmation of the truth that the gospel dispensation took its rise from Christ our great Mediator, and was a glorious display of the holiness of God. The world could not have the least ground to think they were imposed on, when they concluded that, according to the predictions of all the holy prophets who went before him, this Jesus was he who was to come into the world to erect that dispensation in which his own and his Father's glory were eminently to shine forth, and by which the name of God was to be hallowed in a greater degree than it had ever been before.—Again, God sanctified his own name under the gospel dispensation, in raising Christ from the dead, after he had finished the work which he came into the world to perform. In this respect it may be said of him, that 'for,' or after, 'the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honour,'^m and put into a capacity of applying the redemption which he had purchased; so that God the Father 'glorified the Son, that the Son also might glorify him.'ⁿ That this was not done till he had made a full satisfaction to the justice of God, and thereby glorified his holiness to the utmost, has been already considered. After his resurrection, he entered upon his glory; and, from that time, the gospel dispensation might, by way of eminency, be said to begin. Hence we may apply to this occasion the words of the psalmist, 'Sing unto the Lord ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'^o—Again, God sanctified or hallowed his name in his dealings with the Jewish nation, after Christ's ascension into heaven. These dealings made way for the establishment of the gospel church, and were an awful display of his holiness. It must be supposed that the treatment which our Saviour met with from that nation, in which they might be said to fill up the measure of their iniquities to the utmost, would be followed with some terrible displays of divine vengeance. Accordingly, the utter ruin of their civil and religious liberties was the immediate consequence; and it is a visible proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and a very awful instance of God's being sanctified in them.—Further, the holiness of God appears in the methods which he took to propagate his gospel through the world. This was not to be done by might or power, nor by those methods of secular policy whereby civil states are advanced; but by his Spirit, whereby they who were called, were sufficiently qualified for this important work. These preached the gospel to all nations, according to the commission which was given them, confirmed it by miracles, and were instrumental in gathering a people out of the world, who yielded themselves willing subjects to Christ, a people called

^k Numb. xx. 12.^l John x. 36.^m Heb. ii. 9.ⁿ John xvii. 1.^o Psal. xxx. 4

by his name, and subjected and entirely devoted to him.—Again, the holiness of God appears in all those doctrines which were preached, on which the faith of the church is built ; and in those ordinances in which they were to express their subjection to Christ, and hope of salvation by him. The doctrines of the gospel are all pure and holy. Their great design is to set forth the harmony of the divine perfections, as displayed in the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, and to induce those who are made partakers of it to serve him in holiness and righteousness. There is no gospel doctrine which leads to licentiousness, or gives the least countenance to it. None have a right to claim an interest in Christ's righteousness, or to hope for that salvation which he has purchased, but they who believe ; and none can be said to believe to the saving of the soul, but they who are enabled to perform all those duties whereby it will appear that they are as holy as well as an happy people. All those ordinances also which Christ has instituted in the gospel, have a tendency to set forth the holiness of God. What these are, has been considered under some former Answers ; as also that they were instituted by Christ, and that no creature has a right to invent any modes of worship, or make any additions to his institutions, without incurring the guilt of depraving and sullyng the beauty of gospel worship.^p All therefore that I shall add under this Head, is, that as these are set apart, and sanctified by God, to be means of grace, and pledges of his presence ; so those who engage in them are to do so with the view of their being made holy in all conversation, as he who hath called them is holy. Thus God sanctifies his own name in the dispensations of his providence and grace.

Now when we pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' with a particular view to what God does in order to the sanctifying of it, we adore him with an holy trembling, beholding the displays of his vindictive justice in punishing sin. If he sees the punishing of sin to be necessary to secure his own honour as the Governor of the world, so that without it he would not appear to be an holy God, nor the glory of his truth in those threatenings which he has denounced against sin discovered, we are fully satisfied that all his ways are right, and acquiesce in his providence ; and when his judgments are made manifest, we say, 'Hallowed be thy name.' When, however, we put up this petition, with a particular view to God's executing his threatened vengeance on his enemies, several cautions are to be used. We are to take heed that we do not offer the petition out of hatred to the persons of any. For even they who are the monuments of divine justice, in whom God will be glorified as a sin-revenging Judge, are the objects of our compassion, as they are miserable ; how much soever that sin which is the cause of their misery, is to be hated and detested by us. We must always pray, also, that God would rather convert than destroy his enemies, were it consistent with his purpose, which must be accomplished. Again, we are never called to pray expressly for the damnation of any one, how great an enemy soever he may have been to God or us. On the contrary, we are to pray that God would glorify his name in his salvation by Jesus Christ. Further, if we pray that God would prevent those evils to which his church is exposed, through the power or malice of its enemies, and that, in order to this, he would remove these enemies out of the way, that they may not be able to hurt them ; we are to consider their removal only as an expedient for the church's safety, so that if one of the two must suffer ruin, we desire that it may be rather his enemies than his people. We should be glad if God would be pleased to bring about the welfare of his church some other way ; but if not, when we pray that his name may be hallowed, by the removal of their enemies, we do so principally with submission to his will, and an humble acknowledgment that all his judgments are right. Thus concerning God's sanctifying his own name, as the subject of our prayer in this petition.

II. When we pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' we signify our desire that we may be enabled to glorify God in every thing whereby he makes himself known. Here there is something supposed, namely, that all men are utterly unable and disinclined of themselves, to honour God aright, or to improve the various displays of his glory which we behold in his word and works. This arises from the sinfulness of our

nature, our alienation from an holy God, and opposition to him; so that without the assistance of his Spirit, we are not able to do any thing which is good. Hence, we pray that God would make us holy, by rendering the means of grace conducive to our sanctification, that we may give him the glory due to his name.

But the thing more especially prayed for, with respect to ourselves and others, is, that we may be enabled to act suitably to the discoveries which God has made of his divine perfections; that we may adore his wisdom, power, and goodness in all he does, and worship him in all his ordinances in an holy manner, or, as the psalmist expresses it, 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.'^q We are also to desire that all his holy institutions may be made means of grace to us, that we may be sanctified by his truth, that beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be transformed into his image, consisting in holiness and righteousness, that we may have an high esteem of every thing whereby he makes himself known, and glorify him in thought, word, and deed.

In particular, we pray that we may never think or speak of the divine perfections, but with a becoming reverence, and suitable acts of faith. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite wisdom, we are to pray that we may not only admire the traces and footsteps of that wisdom as they are visible in all his works, but that we may thereby be made wise unto salvation. When we conceive of him as a God of infinite power, we are to desire that he would enable us to have recourse to him, to work all that grace in us which can be effected by none but him, with whom all things are possible. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite goodness and mercy, we are to pray that we may be encouraged to hope that we shall be made partakers of his goodness, by his communicating to us the blessings which accompany salvation. When he reveals himself as a God of infinite holiness, we are to desire that we may be conformed to him, in some measure, so as to be enabled to hate and flee from every thing which is contrary to holiness; and that all sin, which contains a reflection on the purity of his nature, as well as a contempt of his authority, may be abhorred and detested by us. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite faithfulness, a God that keepeth covenant and mercy to them that fear him, who has made many promises respecting their salvation, and will certainly accomplish them, we are to pray that we may depend upon him, put our trust in him, and that he would remember his good word unto us on which he hath caused us to hope. When he makes himself known as our Creator, he the Potter and we the clay, we are to pray that we may be well-pleased with all the dispensations of his providence towards us, considering that he has a right to do what he will with his own. When he reveals himself as our Redeemer, we are to pray that we may be able to conclude that we are bought with that invaluable price which Christ gave for his elect; and if we have a comfortable hope concerning our interest in Christ, we are to desire that we may walk as becomes those who are laid under the highest obligations to love him and live to him.

Again, we pray that we may worship God in a right manner, in all his ordinances. Accordingly, when he encourages us to attend to what he imparts in these ordinances, as in hearing or reading the word, we pray that we may be enabled to receive the truth in the love of it; that we may improve it as that which is 'not the word of men, but of God, which effectually working in them that believe;'^r that we may esteem it as the only infallible rule of faith and duty; that we may be enabled to 'hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against him.'^s When we draw nigh to him in prayer, in which he requires that we should sanctify his name as a God all-sufficient, on whom we depend for the supply of our wants; or when we bless and praise him for what we have received, we supplicate that the frame of our spirits may be suited to the spirituality and importance of the duty we are engaged in, that we may not be like those whom our Saviour speaks of, who 'draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.'^t

Further, as God makes himself known to us by his works, we are to beg of him that, in the work of creation, we may see and admire his eternal power and God

q Psal. xxix. 2.

r 1 Thess. ii. 13.

s Psal. cxix. 11.

t Matt. xv. 8.

head, and that from his works of common providence in which he upholds and governs all things, we may take occasion to adore the manifold wisdom of God, his almighty power, and the inexhaustible treasure of his goodness. But more especially when he discovers himself in the gracious dispensations of his providence, in those things which have an immediate reference to our salvation, we are not only to beg that he would enable us to look on them with admiration, but are particularly to express our love and thankfulness to Christ our great Mediator and Advocate, as those who humbly trust and hope that we have an interest in him by faith. Thus concerning our requesting these things for ourselves.

We might here observe something concerning our praying that others may be enabled to act suitably to the discoveries which God has made of his perfections. We are to pray that they may have the highest esteem for God in all the points of view which we have specified; and consequently, that his name may be known throughout the whole world, not merely as the God of nature, but as he has revealed himself in his word. Hence, we are to pray that the way of salvation by Christ may be known, and his name adored and magnified as a Redeemer and Saviour, in those parts of the world which are at present destitute of gospel light; and that, where the word is preached, it may be received with faith and love, that they who are called Christians may walk more becoming that relation which they stand in to the blessed Jesus. Thus concerning the subject of our requests in this petition, respecting God's enabling us and others to glorify him in every thing by which he makes himself known. There are two things inferred hence in the close of this Answer.

1. When we pray that God would sanctify his name, we, in effect, desire that he would prevent and remove every thing which is dishonourable to it. Some things tend to cast so great a reproach on the name of God, that sinners are hardened in their opposition to him; as David, by his sin, is said to have 'given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.'^u God is highly dishonoured by those open and scandalous sins which are committed by such as make a profession of religion. By these sins, they make it apparent that they are strangers to the power of religion; and they lay a stumbling-block in the way of persons who are ready to take an estimate of the ways of God, from the conversation of those who in words profess but in works deny him. Some deny the very being, perfections, and providence of God, or being ignorant of him, worship they know not what; and there are others who treat things sacred with profaneness and scurrility; and, instead of sanctifying the name of God, openly blaspheme and cast a contempt on all his sacred institutions. Hence, we are to pray that God would prevent and remove atheism. When persons not only act as though there were no God, but with blasphemy and daring insolence express their atheism in words, they are generally hardened in their iniquities, and bid defiance to his justice; as though they were, as is said of the leviathan, 'made without fear,'^x and were not apprehensive of any ill consequences. These are not to be convinced by arguments; though there is nothing which occurs in the works of creation and providence, but what might confute them and put them to silence, did they duly attend to it. Hence, we are to pray that God would assert his divine Being and perfections, and give them some convincing proof of these, by impressing the dread and terror of his wrath upon their consciences, that so they may learn not to blaspheme; or that he would give them that internal light by which they may be brought to adore and sanctify his name. And as there are multitudes of practical atheists, who behave themselves as though there were no God to observe what they do, or punish them for it, and who presumptuously conclude that they may rebel without being called to an account; we are to pray that God, by his grace, would prevent prevailing impiety, by working a thorough reformation in the hearts of men, to the end that practical godliness may be promoted, and his name glorified.—Again, we are to pray that God would prevent and remove that ignorance which is inconsistent with persons sanctifying his name. This respects, more especially, the not knowing or inquiring into those great doctrines which are of the highest importance, and which more

directly tend to the advancing of the glory of God, and the obtaining of eternal life. In those who are destitute of divine revelation, this ignorance is invincible. Hence, with respect to such, we are to pray that God would grant to them the means of grace, by sending his gospel among them; that they who sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, may have a glorious light shining about them, whereby they may be made acquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. But there are others who sit under the sound of the gospel, and yet remain strangers to its great doctrines, who have no love to the truth, and act as though it did not belong to them to study the scriptures. These are wilfully ignorant, like those who are said to 'hate knowledge, and not to choose the fear of the Lord.' We are to pray with regard to such, that in order to their sanctifying the name of God, they may be led into the knowledge of those great doctrines in which the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is set forth, as it is in the work of redemption by Christ, together with the way in which righteousness and life may be attained; and that they may know what are those graces which are inseparably connected with and necessary to salvation.—Again, we are to pray that God would prevent or remove idolatry; either such as is more gross, and practised by the heathen and others, who give that worship to creatures which is due to God alone; or that idolatry which may be observed in the hearts and lives of many who, though they abhor its grosser acts, are nevertheless guilty of it in their loving the creature more than God. This sin is what we all are either chargeable with or in danger of, and is directly contrary to our sanctifying the name of God. Hence, we are to pray, with respect to the former, that he would convince them that what they falsely call worship, is a dishonour to him, and is abhorred by him; and, with respect to the latter, that he would convince us that he deserves our supreme love, and will not admit of any thing to stand in competition with him; that he would enable us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; that, in order to this, he would deliver us from the iniquity of covetousness, or those inordinate affections by which we are inclined immoderately to pursue the world, and which are inconsistent with an heavenly conversation; and that we may be kept from self-seeking, or trusting to our own righteousness for justification, or giving that glory to any other which is due to God alone.—Further, we are to pray for the preventing and removal of that profaneness which is contrary to the sanctifying of the name of God; that persons may not give themselves that liberty, which many do, to treat things sacred in a common way, or make religion the subject of wit and drollery; which is very disgusting to the ears of those who have an awe of God on their spirits, and altogether unbecoming persons professing godliness. We are also to beg that God would deliver us from engaging in religious duties in a formal way, as though his name were to be sanctified only by an external show or appearance of religion, without that internal disposition of heart which is required in all those who draw nigh to him in a holy manner; and also that we may be kept from making any innovation in the worship of God, and thereby profaning it, while we pretend to add to its beauty and its acceptableness in his sight,—conduct which is so far from hallowing his name, that it is highly provoking to him.

2. Another thing inferred from the account we have had of those methods by which the name of God is said to be sanctified, is, that we are to beg of him, that, by his overruling providence, he would direct and dispose of all things to his own glory. This is his immediate work; without which his name would not be sanctified by his creatures. It consists in his bringing a revenue of glory to himself, out of those things which seem to be subversive of it. One of the glories of providence is, that God brings good out of evil, and renders some things subservient to his interest, which in themselves have a tendency to overthrow it. This may be observed in several things consequent upon the sins and persecutions of the church. Thus, when Israel revolted from God, by making the golden calf in the wilderness, he first humbled them greatly for it, and then spirited them with zeal to execute judgment on those who did not repent of it. And afterwards, when, at Moses' entreaty, he forgave this sin, he filled them with a zeal for the establishing of his

worship, equal to that which had been expressed before in profaning his name : so that, as they then parted with their golden ear-rings to make the idol which they worshipped,^z they now made a very large contribution for the building of the tabernacle.^a—Again, when, by their abominable idolatry, they had provoked God to give them into the hands of those who carried them captive into Babylon, the event was so overruled by his providence, that they were never guilty of idolatry afterwards, whatever temptations they had to it. Hence, when they returned from captivity, how much soever they were chargeable with want of zeal for building the temple, and setting up public worship in it,^b or with many other crimes, in the priests seeking their secular interest rather than the glory of God, in their performing several branches of their office in a profane manner, and thereby rendering the public worship contemptible, and in their offering the refuse of the flock in sacrifice to God, for which they were reprov'd by him;^c yet we never find them reprov'd for idolatry after their captivity. Accordingly, some think that the vision which the prophet Zechariah had of the woman who was called wickedness, 'sitting in the midst of the ephah,' and of this being 'borne by two women that had wings like the wings of a stork into the land of Shinar,' or Chaldea, 'to build an house for it,'^d that it might there be 'established, and set upon her own base,' intimates that the idolatry of the heathen should not spread itself among the Israelites as it had done, but be confined to those parts of the world which had formerly set it up, and which therefore are considered as the proper seat of it, and not the church. The same thing seems to be foretold by the prophet Hosea, when he says, that 'the children of Israel, after they had been many days without a king, without a priest, and without a sacrifice, should be without an image.'^e The former part of this passage denotes that they should have their civil and religious state broken and discontinued; the latter seems to intimate, that providence would so far overrule this affliction that they should be disinclined and averse to idolatry, as they are at this day, though, in other respects, altogether alienated from God.—Again, all the persecutions which the church has met with from its enemies, with a design to bring about its ruin and destruction, have been overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. Thus when Saul, before his conversion, 'made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison,' so that 'a great persecution' was raised by his instigation, and the people of God could not meet safely at Jerusalem, but were 'scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria';^f the event was ordered by the providence of God for the greater spread of the gospel, so that the Samaritans received the word of God. In following ages, also, we may observe that whatever attempts have been made against the interest of Christ in the world, have, contrary to the design of his enemies, been made subservient to its greater advancement. Accordingly, some have observed that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church. Thus, too, the psalmist's prediction has been fulfilled, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'^g And often, when the gospel has, like the sea, lost ground in one part of the world, it has gained it in another.—Moreover, we may observe that God glorifies his holiness by overruling the falls and miscarriages of particular believers. They are hereby made more humble, watchful, and circumspect for the future; and, when restored from their backslidings, they are put upon admiring his grace, and excited to thankfulness, which the nature of their case requires. They also take occasion to warn others, lest they be entangled in the snare out of which they have escaped; or if fallen, to recommend to them those methods of divine grace whereby they themselves have been recovered. This improvement the psalmist made of the dealings of God with him. When he speaks of his being 'brought out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, his feet set upon a rock, and his goings established;' he adds, 'Many shall see it and shall fear, and shall trust in the Lord.'^h And when God's people have been greatly dejected under the troubles they have met with, he has overruled their sufferings for the restoring of comforts to them, and for enabling them to comfort others in

z Exod. xxxii. 2, 3.

c Mal. i. 10, et seq.

g Psal. lxxvi. 10.

a Chap. xxxv. 21—29, and xxxvi. 5, 6.

d Zech. v. 7—11.

h Psal. xl. 2, 3.

e Hos. iii. 4.

b Hag. i. 9.

f Acts viii. 1—5.

similar afflictions. Accordingly, the event, as the apostle expresses it, 'redounds to their consolation and salvation.'ⁱ Thus concerning the first petition of the Lord's prayer, as it is explained in the Answer before us.

We shall now consider how this petition may be reduced into practice, that we may be directed in our addressing ourselves to God in those things which concern the glory of his name. Accordingly, it is as if we said, "We adore thee, O our God, that thou hast been pleased to make such discoveries of thyself to thy people, as thou hast done in all ages." In particular we give thanks at the remembrance of thine holiness. Thou mightest, indeed, have glorified thy name in the everlasting destruction of the whole race of fallen man; but thou hast sanctified thy name, and advanced thy perfections in bringing about the work of our redemption by a Mediator, in which justice and mercy are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other; and thou hast hereby a greater revenue of glory redounding to thy name than by all thine other works, or than could have been brought to thee by the united services of the most excellent creatures. We also bless thee that thou hast been pleased to make such bright discoveries of thyself in thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name; that thou hast given us thy gospel, and all the ordinances and means of grace, that hereby thou mayest gather to thyself a people out of the world, who might be holy in all conversation, as thou who hast called them art holy. We confess that we have not sanctified thy name as we ought; nor attended on thine ordinances with that reverence and holy fear which is due to thy divine majesty, for which thou hast testified thy displeasure against us, in withdrawing thy presence from thine own institutions. We acknowledge that herein thou art righteous, and hast punished us less than our iniquities have deserved; for thou mightest have removed thy candlestick out of its place, or taken thine ordinances from us, as thou hast done from many, who once worshipped thee, as we do at this day, but are now wholly estranged from thee. Revive thy work, O Lord, we beseech thee, and hereby sanctify thy great name. Let thy word have free course and be glorified. Set up thy standard against every thing which opposes thine interest in the world. Send forth thy light and thy truth, whereby the ignorant may be instructed in the way of salvation by Christ. Give a check to that atheism, profaneness, and irreligion that abounds among a professing people; and let all the dispensations of thy providence have a tendency to bring about the work of reformation, that thereby thou mayest be glorified, and thy people enabled, more and more, to sanctify thee in every thing whereby thou makest thyself known."

THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCI. *What do we pray for in the second petition?*

ANSWER. In the second petition, which is, "Thy kingdom come," acknowledging ourselves, and all mankind, to be, by nature, under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate, that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted; that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever; and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

In this petition there are, first, some things supposed, relating to the sovereignty and dominion of God over men, and the opposition which it meets with,—which, how great soever it be, shall not hinder its advancement in the world. Secondly, there are several things which we are directed to pray for, in reference to these things which are supposed.

What is supposed in the Second Petition.

I. One thing supposed in this petition, is, that God is a great and glorious King. This is the necessary result of his being the Creator of all things. From that character arises an universal propriety in all things, and a right to dispose of them at his pleasure, in the methods of his providence; so that he can no more lose his right to govern the world, than he can cease to be God. It may be farther observed, that the subjects governed are intelligent creatures; for, though all other things are upheld by him, and made use of to fulfil his pleasure, yet they cannot be said to be under a law, or the subjects of moral government. Hence, God is more especially related to angels and men as their King. As to that branch of his government which is exercised in this lower world, it principally respects men. Now when God is said to be their King, the exercise of his dominion is variously considered, according to the different circumstances in which they are.

1. As men, they are the subjects of his providential kingdom. In this respect, they are the objects of his care and common goodness, which extends itself, as the psalmist says, to 'all his works,'^k or to his 'giving to all, life, and breath, and all things.'^l Moreover, whatever he does in the world, is, in some way or other, designed for their use or advantage, either as subservient to their happiness, or as objects in which they behold the glory of his divine perfections shining forth. In this respect, as the God of nature, he is King over the whole world, whose glory infinitely surpasses that of the greatest monarch on earth. When men are said to have dominion, they derive it from his will and providence. It is also limited; while his is universal. They are likewise accountable to him for the administration of that authority which he commits to them; but he giveth no account of his matters to any one, inasmuch as there is none superior to him. There are also many flaws and imperfections in the government of the best kings on earth, because their wisdom, holiness, power, and justice are imperfect; and sometimes the most desirable ends are not attained. But the divine government is such as tends to set forth God's glorious perfections, and answer the highest ends, namely, the advancement of his own name, in promoting the welfare of his creatures. We may also observe that, not only are the greatest potentates on earth mortal, but their government is often subject to change, and liable to be resisted and controlled by other kings like themselves. But God, on the contrary, has none equal with him, so that his government cannot be controlled; and being all-sufficient, he cannot be destitute of what is necessary to fulfil his purpose, or advance his glory. Again, none but God has a right to give laws to the consciences of men. Indeed, no government is properly spiritual, and such as reaches the heart, like his; nor does the honour which is due to any other, include the least right to divine worship or adoration, which belongs only to him.

2. As God has a peculiar people in the world, who are the objects of his grace, these are the subjects of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, in which respect he is styled, King of saints. This is not only a divine honour which we ascribe to him, but it belongs to him in particular as our Redeemer; and so it is to be understood whenever he is called a King in scripture, as denoting that kingdom which he has received from the Father. His governing the world, on the other hand, which is styled his providential kingdom, necessarily belongs to him as God, and is no more conferred upon him by the will of the Father, than his divine nature, or personality. We do not therefore pray in this petition, that he would govern the world; for we may as well address ourselves to him, that he would be an infinite Sovereign, and act agreeably to his divine nature, which he cannot but be and do. But the kingdom which is here intended, to which we have a more immediate regard, as the subject of this petition, is that which belongs to him as Mediator, which he received from the Father; who is said, in respect to it, to have 'set him' as his 'King upon his holy hill of Zion,'^m and concerning which it was foretold, that 'the government' should be 'upon his shoulder.'ⁿ This is therefore not only an honour, but an office

^k Psal. cxlv. 9.^l Acts xvii. 25.^m Psal. ii. 6.ⁿ Isa. ix. 6.

which he is invested with, having received a commission from the Father to execute it. And whenever he is said to do any thing in the methods of his providence, which have an immediate reference to the salvation of his people, what he does is an exercise of this dominion, or is a branch of the glory of his mediatorial kingdom; and this is what we have a peculiar regard to, when we desire that his kingdom may come. In this respect, we pray that all the dispensations of his providence may tend to the application of that redemption which is purchased for his people; and in particular, that he would subdue them to himself, take possession of their hearts, govern them by his laws, defend them by his power, restrain and conquer all their enemies, and at last, admit them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

In the New Testament, Christ's kingdom is generally taken for the gospel dispensation. He is represented as sitting on a throne of grace; and sinners are invited to come and bow down before him, and receive the blessings which he encourages them to expect, as their merciful Sovereign. This kingdom of grace shall not cease to be administered by him, till all his redeemed ones are made willing, in the day of his power, and eventually brought into a better world; and then it will receive another denomination, and be called the kingdom of heaven. It is true, the gospel dispensation is often so called in the New Testament, as it respects the administration of his gracious government begun and carried on in this world. But, in heaven, that government will be administered in a most glorious manner, agreeably to the state of perfection to which his saints shall there be brought. As, however, these things have been particularly insisted on under a former Answer, in which Christ's kingly office was explained;^o we shall pass them over at present, and proceed to consider another thing supposed in this petition.

II. Though God is the only supreme and lawful Sovereign, yet there are some who pretend to stand in competition with him, and usurp that dominion which belongs only to him. Man no sooner rebelled against him, than he was under the dominion of sin, and was inclined to serve divers lusts and pleasures, and willingly gave himself over as a vassal to Satan, who from that time was styled 'the prince,' or god, 'of this world, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.'^p We must not suppose that he has the least right to this kingdom, or dominion, in which he sets himself against the divine government; yet sinners who rebel against God, are said to be Satan's subjects. Where the gospel is not preached, he reigns without control; and false churches which oppose the faith contained in the gospel, are called 'synagogues of Satan.'^q Indeed, in all those places to which Christ's kingdom of grace has not been extended, persons are said to be subjects of Satan's kingdom; which is opposed to the kingdom of Christ. These two kingdoms divide the world. Hence, when we pray that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, we express an earnest desire that whatsoever has a tendency to oppose it may be ruined and destroyed.

What is prayed for in the Second Petition.

We are now led to consider what we are to pray for in this petition. Now, we are not to pray that God would govern the world, or exercise his providential kingdom; for that he cannot but do. Nor are we to pray that Christ's kingdom may come, in the same sense in which the church prayed for its coming before the gospel dispensation, which is called his kingdom, was erected; for to do so would be, in effect, to deny that there is such a kingdom, or that our Saviour has a church in which he exercises his government in the world. We are to pray, however, that God would eminently display his perfections for the good of his people, in his providential government of the world, and overrule all the dispensations of that government for the advancement of his own name, and the happiness of his church and people. And though, as we have just observed, we are not to pray that the gospel dispensation may be erected; yet we are to pray that Christ's spiritual kingdom may be farther extended, that subjects may be daily brought into it, and that the

^o See Quest. xlv.

^p John xii. 31; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Ephes. ii. 2.

^q Rev. ii. 9.

blessed fruits and effects of it, which tend to promote his own glory and his people's happiness, may be abundantly experienced by them.

1. In particular, when we say, 'Thy kingdom come,' we express our desire that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed. This kingdom Christ will certainly destroy in his own time, inasmuch as it is directly opposite to his own kingdom. The devil's chief design is to draw Christ's subjects off from their allegiance to him. Hence, Christ will certainly plead his own cause, that his enemies may not take occasion to insult him, as though they had gained a victory over the Almighty. Moreover his holiness and justice oblige him to do this; for as Satan's kingdom is supported by sin gaining strength, and as its being so supported tends to cast a reproach on the divine perfections, it must be destroyed. We may add, that every one who is converted, is, as the apostle says, 'delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.'^r Hence, we pray that Christ's interest may flourish in the world; and so we express a desire that whatsoever is contrary to it may be thrown down. There are various steps and degrees whereby Satan's kingdom has been, and shall be, weakened, till it shall be at last wholly destroyed.

1. It met with a great shock when the first gospel promise was given to Adam in paradise, relating to 'the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head,'^s or Christ's coming to defeat Satan's deep laid design against the interest of God in the world, by giving the deceiver a total defeat. Till this promise was given, there could not be the least hope of salvation for fallen man. His condition was not only deplorable but desperate, and, in all appearance, remediless. But by this first display of divine grace, a door of hope was opened, and Satan's kingdom began to be broken and demolished.

2. It met with a farther shock, when men began to lay hold of this promise, and take encouragement from it; when public worship was set up in the world; and when the coming of the Messiah, who was expected to appear in our nature, and in the fulness of time to destroy the works of the devil, was farther made known to the church, and clearer intimations given of the glory of his Person, and the offices he was to execute, so that he was regarded as the object of faith by those who waited for and earnestly desired the gospel day, when all the types and prophecies relating to his coming should have their accomplishment.

3. Satan's kingdom met with a very great defeat, when Christ, who was the desire of all nations, took our nature, and dwelt among us, and, in the whole course of his ministry, discovered the way of salvation to his people more clearly than it had been in former ages; when he finished the work of redemption in his death, whereby he paid to divine justice an infinite price for his elect, and, at the same time, 'destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,'^t or, as it is expressed elsewhere, 'spoiled principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them in his cross.'^u In particular, when he was raised from the dead, and the work which he came to perform was brought to perfection, Satan's kingdom was so effectually destroyed, that he shall not be able to maintain that dominion which he had over those who previously were his vassals, but are now become Christ's subjects by right of redemption.

4. The success of the gospel in the various ages since our Saviour was on earth; his gathering and building up his church, and defeating all the attempts of his enemies who have threatened its ruin, so that the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against it; and its having been favoured with his special presence, and the bestowal and continuance of the means of grace, together with the various instances of success which have attended them; have all had a tendency to weaken and destroy Satan's kingdom.

5. All the victories which believers are enabled to obtain over sin and Satan's temptations, and all the graces which they exercise, and comforts which they experience, are a gradual weakening of Satan's kingdom. It is true, the victory over him is at present not complete, inasmuch as he has too great an interest in the hearts of God's people through the remains of corruption; yet they shall at

^r Co.. i. 13.

^s Jer. iii. 15.

^t Heb. ii. 14.

^u Col. ii. 15.

last be made more than conquerors over him, and the fruits and consequences of the victory which Christ has obtained over him shall be perfectly applied.

II. In desiring that Christ's kingdom may come, we pray that the gospel may be propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in. When the gospel dispensation, which is Christ's kingdom, was first erected, the apostles, who were employed in the important work, were to fulfil the commission which he gave them, in preaching the gospel to all nations. This they accordingly did; and, by the extraordinary hand of God attending their ministry, the gospel was spread, in a short space of time, through a considerable part of the world. Many of the Jews were called,—among whom all that were ordained to eternal life believed: and as for the Gentiles, who formerly were unacquainted with the way of salvation, they had Christ preached to them, and many churches were gathered from among them. Thus the kingdom of Christ was advanced; and a foundation was laid for the propagation and flourishing state of the gospel in all succeeding ages, the effects of which are experienced at this day. Hence, when the petition relating to the coming of Christ's kingdom was used by the first disciples, that which was principally intended by it, was that Christ might be preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world,—that the vail, or the face of the covering which was spread over all nations, might be taken away,—and that the way of salvation might be known by those who sat in the region and shadow of death. When, however, it is used by us, we signify our desire that the invaluable blessing of the gospel may be still continued, and that the promises relating to the greater success of it may have a more full accomplishment. The apostles, indeed, in executing their commission, are said to have preached the gospel to all nations, that is, to a very considerable part of the heathen world. It does not appear, however, that every individual nation in the world has yet been favoured with this privilege; so that what was foretold concerning the earth being 'full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,'^x and other predictions to the same purpose, do not seem hitherto to have had their full accomplishment.^y It is very evident, too, that many nations, who had the gospel preached to them by the apostles, are now wholly destitute of it. And, though it is true a considerable number of the Jews at first believed in Christ; yet the greatest part of that people were cast off, and all remain, at this day, strangers and enemies to him. Hence, we cannot but suppose that those prophecies which respect their conversion, in the latter day, together with the fulness of the Gentiles being brought in, shall be more eminently accomplished than they have hitherto been. This, therefore, is what we are to pray for when we say, 'Thy kingdom come.'

1. We are to be importunate with God, that his interest may be still maintained in the church; that the glory may not depart from it; that it may still enjoy the ordinances of his grace, and those privileges by which it is distinguished from the world, notwithstanding all the attempts of hell and persecuting powers to undermine and overthrow it; and, though it be brought to a very low ebb at this day, that he would revive his work in the midst of the years, till he shall be pleased to cause that glorious day to dawn which his people are now desiring, waiting and hoping for.

2. We are to pray that there may be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit. This is absolutely necessary to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, a farther reformation of the church, and a greater spread of the gospel in those nations where it is not at present known.

3. We are to pray that the church may be furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances necessary to the furtherance of the gospel. We are not to pray, indeed, that new ordinances may be instituted, which at present are not known, and which we have no warrant from scripture to expect. But we are to pray that God, by the good hand of his providence, would send his ordinances, namely, the word, sacraments, and prayer, which are his outward and ordinary means of salvation, into those parts of the world which are at present strangers to them. In particular, we are to pray that wherever God has a people who thirst after the word, but

^x Isa. xi. 9.

^y See Sect. 'The Millennial Reign of Christ,' under Quest. xlv.

enjoy not the preaching of it, especially with such zeal and clearness as is necessary to their spiritual advantage and edification in Christ, he would send faithful labourers among them, that their souls may not pine, starve, and be in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge. Again, we are to pray that where the word of God has been preached with success, so that many believe in Christ, who, nevertheless, have not the advantage of walking together for their mutual edification in a church relation, God would so overrule and order matters that they who have given up themselves to the Lord, may encourage and strengthen the hands of one another, by joining together in religious societies, owning Christ's kingly government, and worshipping him in all those ordinances which he has given to his churches. We are to pray also that, in such circumstances, there may be proper officers spirited, qualified, and raised up, so that there may be a constant supply of 'pastors according to his heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.'^z These are necessary to the well-being of a church. And though extraordinary gifts are not to be expected, as when God was pleased to bestow them on his apostles at the planting of the gospel; yet there are some gifts which Christ has purchased, and we are to pray for, which are particularly adapted to the furnishing of those who are called to minister as officers in his churches, for the promoting of his cause and interest, and the advancing of his spiritual kingdom.

4. We are to pray that the church may be purged from those corruptions which tend to defile it, and which are a great reproach to it, and very unbecoming the relation which it stands in to Christ. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that any church in the world is so pure that there are no corruptions in it, which appear to the eye of the heart-searching God. Some, however, are visible to the world, being notorious, and inconsistent, not only with the purity, but, if allowed of, with the very being of a church of Christ. These are matter of lamentation to the godly, a reproach to those who are chargeable with them, and, as the apostle styles them, 'a root of bitterness, springing up and troubling' them, 'whereby many are defiled.'^a These corruptions are such as respect either the faith or the conversation of professors.—First, there are corruptions in matters of faith. These consist in denying the most important doctrines, which are necessary to be known and believed in order to our salvation. With respect to them, we are to pray that Christians may not depart from the faith which was once delivered to the saints, being 'carried about with divers and strange doctrines,'^b or as it is said elsewhere, 'soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.'^c We are also to pray that he would root out those errors and heresies which are inconsistent with the church's purity; and which have a greater tendency to bring about its ruin than all the persecutions it can meet with from its most enraged enemies.—Again, there are corruptions which more especially respect the conversation of those who are called Christians, who walk not as becomes the gospel of Christ, so that as regards them there is no visible difference between the church and the world. Thus the apostle tells the church at Corinth,^d that some of them were 'carnal, and walked as men;' that is, notwithstanding the profession of religion which they made, they differed little in their conversation from the men of the world. He also speaks of others who 'profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.'^e Now, with respect to these, we are to pray that their profession may be adorned by a holy life; that none may cast a stumblingblock in the way of those who watch for their haltings, and are glad to take all opportunities to improve the falls and miscarriages of Christians against them; and that God, by his providence, or rather by his Spirit, poured out from on high, would refine and purify his church, and, as the prophet expresses it, 'purge away the dross, and take away all the tin.'^f

5. We are to pray that the ordinances of Christ may be administered without any mixture of human inventions, which tend to debase them, and are far from adding any beauty or glory to them. It is natural, indeed, for man to be fond of, and pleased with, those ordinances which take their rise from himself; but God, who is

z Jer. iii. 15.
d 1 Cor. iii. 3.

a Heb. xii. 15.
e Tit. i. 16.

b Chap. xiii. 9.
f Isa. i. 25.

c Gal. i. 6.

jealous for the purity of his own worship, can in no wise approve of them; and they are so far from advancing Christ's kingdom, that God reckons the introducing of them no other than 'setting our threshold by his thresholds,' and 'our post by his,' and calls it 'a defiling his holy name, by the abominations which are committed,' and denounces it as the ground and reason of his 'consuming' men 'in his anger.'^g Hence, we are to pray that whatever intrudes itself into any branch of the worship of God, without receiving any warrant or sanction from himself, may be removed out of the way, that so his church may be reformed, and its destruction prevented.

6. We are to pray that the church may be encouraged by civil magistrates; that their government may be subservient to Christ's spiritual kingdom; that, according to God's promise, 'kings may be' its 'nursing fathers, and their queens' its 'nursing mothers';^h that by this means the church may have peace and safety, and not be exposed, as it has often been, to the rage and fury of persecuting powers; and also that magistrates may be guardians, not only of the civil, but of the religious liberties of their subjects, which are necessary to complete the happiness of a nation, and bring down many blessings from God upon it. We are also to pray that God would not only incline magistrates to advance religion, by rendering the administration of civil government subservient to that purpose, but that by a steady adherence to it themselves, they may strengthen the hands of the faithful, and encourage many others to embrace it. If, on the other hand, they are disposed to exercise their power in such a way as tends to the discountenancing of religion, and the weakening of the hands of those who profess it; we are to pray that God would overrule their counsels, and incline them to deal favourably with those who desire steadfastly to adhere to it.

7. We are to pray that the means of grace may be made effectual to the converting of sinners, and to the confirming, comforting, and building up of believers; that a great and effectual door may be opened for the success of the gospel; that it may 'come, not in word only, but also in power';ⁱ that by this means the Lord would be pleased to add to the church daily such as shall be saved; and that thus Christ's government, or spiritual kingdom, may be promoted in the hearts of his people, and they be enabled to testify a ready and willing subjection to his authority, and to yield obedience to him with all the powers and faculties of their souls.

8. We are to pray for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, at his second and glorious coming; when the work of grace shall be brought to its utmost perfection, and all the elect, who shall have lived from the beginning to the end of time, shall be gathered together and brought into Christ's kingdom of glory, as they have formerly been into his kingdom of grace; and when the highest honours shall be conferred upon them, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. As the church under the Old Testament dispensation prayed that Christ's kingdom of grace might come, that is, that it might be administered, as it has been, and now is, under the gospel dispensation,—or, as the scripture expresses it, that Christ would be 'like a roe, or like a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,'^k or, that 'the Desire of all nations would fill his house with glory; so the New Testament church is represented as praying that Christ would 'come quickly,' according to his promise,^l and put a final period to every thing which has a tendency to detract from the glory of his kingdom, or the happiness of his subjects. Hence, we must pray that the elect who are Christ's mystical body, may be gathered and brought in to him; and then we may be sure that he will hasten his coming. Till this is done, we are to wait patiently, as 'the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,' in the desired harvest;^m and, in the meantime, we are to pray that he would be pleased to exert his power, and make the dispensations of his providence in the world conducive to the ends desired, and more particularly with respect to ourselves. Accordingly, we are to pray that we may have, not only an habitual, but an actual meetness for his heavenly kingdom; that when our

^g Ezek. xliii. 8.
^k Cant. ii. 17.

^h Isa. xlix. 23.
^l Rev. xxii. 20.

ⁱ 1 Thess. i. 5.
^m James v. 7.

Lord shall come, we may not be like those 'virgins' mentioned in the parable, who 'all slumbered and slept,'ⁿ but that, upon the first alarm, we may go out to meet him with joy and triumph; that, as an evidence of our meetness for his coming, we may be enabled to walk as 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth,' or as those who 'desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;'^o that we may keep up an intercourse with Christ, and be ready to entertain him with delight and pleasure whenever he comes, so that when he who is our life, our hope, and Saviour, as well as our King, shall appear, we may appear with him in glory.

We have thus considered the administration of Christ's kingly government, as the subject of this petition. That we may be further assisted in directing our prayers to God agreeably to the petition, we may consider his children as addressing themselves to him to this effect: "We adore and magnify thee, O God our Saviour, as the Governor of the world; who dost according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Thy power is irresistible, and thy works wonderful. But it is matter of the highest astonishment, that thou shouldst exercise that gracious government in which thou condescendest to be called the King of saints. What is man that thou shouldst thus magnify him, and set thine heart upon him; that they whom thou mightest have dealt with as traitors, and enemies to thy government, and, as such, have ruled them with a rod of iron, and broken them in pieces, like a potter's vessel, should be admitted to partake of the privileges which thou art pleased to bestow on thy servants and subjects! Thou hast often invited us, by holding forth thy sceptre of grace, to come and acknowledge thee to be our Lord and Sovereign; but our hearts have been filled with rebellion against thee. We have served divers lusts and pleasures, and been in confederacy with hell and death, yielding ourselves slaves to Satan, thine avowed enemy. But now we desire to cast ourselves down before thy footstool; and, while we stand amazed at thy clemency, we, with the greatest thankfulness, accept of the overture of a pardon which thou hast made in the gospel, accounting it our highest privilege, as well as our indispensable duty, to be thy subjects. Write thy law, we beseech thee, in our hearts; bring down every high thought and imagination, which sets itself against thine interest; and make us entirely willing to be thy servants, devoted to thy fear. We also beg that thou wouldst take to thyself thy great power and reign. Let Satan's kingdom be destroyed, and thy gospel propagated throughout the world. May thine ancient people, the Jews, who now refuse that thou shouldst reign over them, be called and inclined to own thee as their King; and may the dark parts of the earth see thy salvation. Reform thy churches; let them be constantly supplied with those who shall go in and out before them, and shall feed them with knowledge and understanding. May they be purged from those corruptions which are a reproach to thy government. Let not the commandments of men be received, instead of thine holy institutions. May thine ordinances be purely dispensed, that thy people may have ground to hope for thy presence in them; and may they be made effectual for the converting of sinners, and the establishing of thy saints in their holy faith. And let all the dispensations of thy providence in the world have a tendency to advance thy kingdom of grace, that, as thou hast in all ages appeared in behalf of thy church, so it may be preserved and carried through all the difficulties which it meets with, and be secured from the attempts of thine enemies against it, till they who rejoice in thy government here shall be received into thy heavenly kingdom hereafter."

THE THIRD PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCL. *What do we pray for in the third petition?*

ANSWER. In the third petition, which is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," acknowledging that, by nature, we, and all men, are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and to do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the devil; we pray that God would, by his Spirit, take away from ourselves and others, all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart, and by his grace, make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven.

The Meaning of Doing the Will of God.

To understand this petition, we must inquire what is meant by the will of God, and how it is said to be done by us. We considered,^p under a former Answer, that the will of God is distinguished into his secret and revealed will; and we showed that, as the former of these is the reason of his own actings, and determines the event of things, so the latter is what we are more especially concerned about, as it is a rule of duty to us. The will of God is also farther distinguished into his preceptive and providential will. The former of these we are to obey; the latter we are to admire, submit to, and be well-pleased with. Accordingly, when we pray, 'Thy will be done,' we desire that his laws might be obeyed, and his universal dominion and right to govern the world practically acknowledged; and that, by this means, sin might be prevented, and this earth might not become so much like hell as it would be if this method which God has taken to direct our actions and give a check to our corruptions, were wholly disregarded by us. When we consider God as the Creator of man, the next idea we have of him is, that he exercises his dominion and sovereignty in giving laws to him. Now, these laws man is under a natural obligation to obey; otherwise he disowns himself to be a creature, or a subject; and his doing this is the highest affront which can be offered to the divine Majesty, and exposes him to that punishment which is due to those who are found in open rebellion against him. This is what we are to pray against in this petition.

Now, here there is something supposed; it is supposed that the will of God must be known by us, otherwise it cannot be obeyed. Hence, his law has been promulgated; particularly as it was written by God on the heart of man at first, in such legible characters that our apostasy from him has not wholly erased it.^q But besides this, there must be an internal impression made on the minds and consciences of men, whereby they may be brought to see the excellency and glory of the law, and their indispensable obligation to yield obedience to it. Again, it is supposed that the will of man is naturally averse and disinclined to obey the divine commands. This aversion is the result of our fall and apostasy from God; and, through the corruption of our nature, we are prone to say, 'Who is lord over us?'^r and, 'What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?'^s This is the source of all that opposition which the heart of man expresses against the laws of God; while sinners entertain a fixed resolution to give laws to themselves, and are wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the devil. Such conduct the apostle calls 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;' and 'walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.'^t This will of the flesh is agreeable to the dictates of Satan, by whom it is contented to be kept in perpetual bondage; and his suggestions are agreeable to the corruption of nature. On the other hand, the commands of God, being contrary to it, as containing the signatures of his holiness, are grievous and burdensome to fallen man. The law is spiritual, and therefore cannot be agreeable to those who are carnal, and, as it were, sold under sin. Accordingly, sinful man is determined to do, not what is lawful, but what is pleasing to himself. He considers, not what

^p See Sect. 'The Eternity &c. of the purpose of Election,' under Quest. xii.

^q See Sect.

^r Proofs that Election respects only a part of mankind,' under Quest xii.

^r Psal. xii. 4

^s Job xxi. 15

^t Eph. ii. 2, 3.

he ought to do, as being accountable to God, the Judge of all, for his behaviour in this world ; but whether any action is agreeable to his own inclinations, and affords some present delight to his carnal appetite. As for Satan, he uses his utmost endeavours to strengthen our sinful resolutions, and increase the depravity and corruption of our nature. With this view, he daily presents objects to our imaginations which are agreeable to the desires of the flesh ; and these are received with pleasure and delight. Thus a snare is laid for the ruin of the soul, so that it becomes more and more alienated from the life of God, and not only indifferent as to matters of religion, but utterly averse to them. This is the reason of all the dishonour which is brought to God in the world ; whereby it appears, that his will is not done in it as it ought to be.

Moreover, as the will of man sets itself against the commanding will of God, so it expresses the same aversion to his providential will. This will, indeed, is not said to be 'done;' but it ought to be submitted to by us. Yet, we are as much inclined to find fault with what God does in the world, as we are to rebel against his law. We are discontented and uneasy, for example, with the allotments of providence, especially when we are under the afflicting hand of God ; and are apt to charge him as dealing hardly with us, because we have not the opportunities which we desire to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, or because some check is given to our corrupt appetites or inclinations. How ready are we to complain of injuries done us, as though God were obliged to give us whatever we would have, how contrary soever it may be to our real good and advantage, as well as his own glory ! Of this we have many instances, in the perverse behaviour of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They frequently complained of the hardships they endured ; and, by their murmuring against God, provoked him to send those terrible judgments which, as they might have foreseen, would be the consequence of their conduct. Such behaviour as theirs is most unreasonable towards him who has a right to do what he will with his own, and directly contrary to that temper of mind which the gospel suggests ; for we are there taught, in whatsoever state or condition of life we are, therewith to be contented. Now, it is in respect, both to our obeying the divine commands, and to our being contented with the divine appointments, that we are instructed, in this petition, to pray that 'the will of the Lord' may 'be done.'

What is prayed for in the Third Petition.

We are now led to consider what we are taught to pray for in this petition, when we say, 'Thy will be done.'

1. With respect to God's commanding will, we are to pray that he would incline and enable us to yield obedience to it. We are to be earnest with him, that he would remove the ignorance and blindness of our minds, that we may see a beauty and glory in every thing which he commands ; for, next to the sovereignty of God, which is the first motive to our doing the divine will, the excellency of what he commands is to be considered as an inducement to obedience. Hence, we are to be convinced that his 'law is holy,' his 'commandment holy, just, and good,'^u or that duty and interest are inseparably connected, so that the one can never be secured without the other. To convince us of this is the work of the Spirit of God, when he directs and leads us in the way in which we ought to walk.

Again, we are to pray that God would take away the obstinacy and perverseness of our wills, that our obedience may be matter of choice, and performed with delight, otherwise it cannot be pleasing to him. Accordingly, we are to pray that our obedience may be performed with the utmost sincerity, as approving ourselves not to men, but God, who searcheth the heart ; and that it may proceed from a principle of spiritual life and grace, and be done with a single eye to his glory, whose we are and whom we desire to serve. We are also to pray that our obedience may arise from a filial fear of God, and a love to him, and not merely from a dread of punishment, or fear of his wrath, as the consequence of our rebellion

^u Rom. vii. 12.

against him, or from a mercenary frame of spirit which looks at nothing farther than some advantages which we expect to receive from him; and that it may also proceed from a sense of gratitude for the many benefits which we receive from him, whereby we are, as it were, constrained to do his will. We are to pray likewise that our obedience may be universal, with respect to the matter of it, and constant with respect to our perseverance in it. We are not to choose to obey some of the divine commands, and refuse others; or to perform those duties which are most easy, and reject those which are difficult; or to obey the will of God, so far as it comports with our secular interest, and plead with him to be excused as to things which are inconsistent with it. But we must leave it to him alone to prescribe the matter of duty, and express an entire compliance with whatsoever he requires. Thus the psalmist says, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.'^x Moreover, we are to pray that our obedience may be constant, without our growing cold and indifferent in it, or desisting from it, according as our condition in the world is altered; as though we had nothing to do with God and religion but when we are under some pressing difficulties; for to act so is to set our faces heavenward for a time, and afterwards to draw back unto perdition.

2. We are to pray that God would enable us to submit to his disposing will, as being satisfied that all the dispensations of his providence are right. Accordingly, we are to say with David, 'Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.'^y Now, our submission consists in maintaining a quiet, easy, composed frame of spirit, fitted for the exercise of religious duties, though under trying dispensations of providence. It consists also in our justifying God, and laying the blame on ourselves, whatever afflictions we are exercised with. Thus when the psalmist speaks of himself as deserted, and of God as 'far from helping him,' he acknowledges the equity of his dispensations, and says, 'Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel;'^z or, as he elsewhere expresses himself, 'The Lord is upright, he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.'^a Moreover, our submission consists in our being disposed to bless God when he takes away outward mercies, as well as when he gives them. Thus Job, when he was stripped at once of all he had, says, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'^b

How the Will of God is to be done.

We are now to consider the manner in which the will of God is to be done. We are taught to pray that it may be 'done on earth as it is in heaven.' We are not to suppose, indeed, that the best saints can arrive, while in this world, at the perfection of the heavenly state; so that it is possible for them to do the will of God in the same manner or degree as it is done in heaven. The particle 'as' respects similitude, rather than equality; and all that we can infer from the use of it in the petition is, that there is some analogy or resemblance between the obedience of the saints here, and that of the inhabitants of heaven.

In particular, the expression, 'Thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven*,' implies that the will of God may be done with great humility and reverence. Thus the angels are represented, in the emblem or vision which the prophet Isaiah saw of 'the Lord sitting on a throne'^c and the seraphim attending him, as having their 'faces covered with their wings,' in token of reverence and humility. And others are described as 'casting their crowns before the throne,'^d intimating that all the glory which they enjoy is derived from him who sits on the throne, and that their honour is not to be regarded or mentioned, when compared with him who is the fountain of it.—Again, this expression implies a desire to do the will of God with all cheerfulness. Some think that the doing of the divine will in this manner is intimated in the vision which John saw concerning the seven angels, who were employed to inflict the seven last plagues on the church's enemies: they are represented as inflicting these plagues with 'harps in their hands,'^e and, at the same time, as singing the praises of God.—Again, we are said to do the will of God on earth, as it is

^x Psal. cxix. 6.

^b Job i. 21.

^y 2 Sam. xv. 26.

^c Isa. vi. 1, 2.

^z Psal. xxii. 1, 3.

^d Rev. vi. 10.

^a Psal. xcii. 15.

^e Rev. xv. 1—3.

done by the angels in heaven, when we do it with faithfulness. Thus when they are represented as ministering to God's people, and as having charge over them to keep them in all their ways, they are spoken of as performing their ministry faithfully. Accordingly, it is said, 'They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'^f—Further, the angels are represented as a pattern of diligence in doing the will of God. Thus it is said of the angel Gabriel, that when the word of command was given him to carry a message to Daniel, he 'flew swiftly,' being expeditious in fulfilling the work about which he was employed.^g—Further, the angels are said to do the will of God with zeal and fervency. For this reason, some think they are called, in the scripture just mentioned, 'seraphim,' or, as they are elsewhere styled, a 'flaming fire.'^h—Again, the angels are said to do the will of God sincerely. Thus the inhabitants of heaven are represented as having 'no guile found in their mouths,' and as being 'without fault before the throne of God.'ⁱ—Finally, they are said to do the will of God with constancy. We read of them as 'serving him day and night in his temple.'^k And the angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, are said 'always to behold the face of God in heaven ;'^l that is, they never give up or are weary of his service.

We have thus an excellent example set before us, in the obedience of the angels ; and are exhorted to pray that, in our measure, we may yield similar obedience to God, though we fall very short of doing it as they do who are in a perfect state. We are therefore taught, in this petition, to lift up our hearts to God in a way of adoration, confession, and supplication, as if we should say, "We acknowledge, O Lord, that thou hast a right to the obedience of all creatures, and hast been pleased to give them thy law as the rule of it. It is our glory, as well as our happiness, to be thy servants ; for thy law is holy, thy commandment holy, just, and good. But we acknowledge and confess before thee, that we have rebelled against thee, and have refused to yield obedience to thy commands. And when we behold the universal corruption of human nature, we blush and are ashamed to think how little glory is brought to thy name, by the service and obedience of thy creatures here below. In heaven thy will is done perfectly, by those who serve thee with the greatest delight and pleasure ; but on earth thou hast but little glory. It is an instance of condescending goodness that thou hast not, long since, abandoned our world, and thereby rendered it like hell. But we beseech thee, take to thyself thy great power and reign in the hearts of men ; subdue their wills to thyself, that they may cheerfully and constantly obey thy commanding will, and submit to thy providential will, as being satisfied that all thy dispensations are right, and shall tend to thy glory, and the welfare of all that fear thy name."

THE FOURTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCIH. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition ?*

ANSWER. In the fourth petition, which is, "Give us this day our daily bread," acknowledging that in Adam, and by our sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them ; and, that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, nor we to merit, or by our own industry, to procure them, but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully ; we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day, in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and, as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them, and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them, and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.

The Meaning of the Word 'Bread' in the Fourth Petition.

IN order to our understanding this petition, we must first consider what is meant by 'bread.' Some have thought that our Saviour hereby intends spiritual mercies,

f Psal. xci. 11, 12.

i Rev. xiv. 5.

g Dan. ix. 21.

k Chap. vii. 15.

h Psal. civ. 4.

l Matt. xviii. 10.

or that bread which is suited to the necessities of our souls ; and particularly, an interest in Christ, who is called ' the bread of life,'^m ' the living bread which came down from heaven.'ⁿ It must be allowed, indeed, that this is a blessing exceeding all those which are of a temporal nature, as much as the happiness of the soul is preferable to that of the body ; and it is, doubtless, to be made the subject of our daily and importunate requests to God, as if we should say, Give me an interest in Christ, else I can have no delight or pleasure in any of the enjoyments of life. Yet this does not seem to be intended by our Saviour in this petition. The bread which we pray for has a more immediate respect to the blessings of this life, which, according to the scripture mode of speaking, are often set forth by the word ' bread.' Thus God tells Adam, after his fall, ' In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread ;'^o by which we are to understand, that he should take a great deal of pains to provide for himself the necessaries of life. So when God promises outward blessings to his people, he tells them that ' bread shall be given ' them, and their ' water shall be sure.'^p And elsewhere, he says, ' I will abundantly bless her provision ; I will satisfy her poor with bread.'^q The blessings of the present life, then, are the bread which we are taught to pray for in this petition.

What is supposed in the Fourth Petition.

1. It is supposed, in this petition, that, by our sins, we have forfeited a right to the outward blessings of the present life. This was the consequence of the forfeiture of life itself, and a part of the curse to which we are exposed by our rebellion against God and apostacy from him. If he should deprive us of all the conveniencies of life, and so embitter it to us that we should be almost inclined to make the unhappy choice which Job did of ' strangling and death, rather than life ;'^r there would be no reason to say that there is unrighteousness with God.

2. It is farther supposed that outward blessings are God's free gift to us. Whether we have a greater or a smaller portion of these, they are to be acknowledged as the fruits of divine bounty. It is God who spreads a table for us. To some he gives a smaller and to others a larger share of temporal good things ; but, whatever we enjoy, it is to be owned as the effect of his providential goodness. We are not excluded, indeed, from the use of those means which are ordained for the preserving of life, and our obtaining the good things of it ; but we must, while using these means, acknowledge that all the wisdom, industry, and success which attend our endeavours are from God. It is he who ' giveth power to get wealth.'^s Or, as is elsewhere said, ' The rich and poor meet together ;' that is, they agree in this, that ' the Lord is the Maker of them all,'^t or that, whatever be their circumstances in the world, it is he who provides for them what they have. And if what we enjoy is sweetened and sanctified to us for our good, so that we have not only the conveniencies of life, but a blessing with them, and are enabled to make a right use and improvement of them, to the glory of God and the advantage of ourselves and others ; we must reckon our enjoyments an instance of divine favour, or the gift of God.

3. It is farther supposed that temporal good things may lawfully be prayed for. As the providence of God does not, as was formerly observed, exclude the use of means ; so it is not inconsistent with prayer, but is rather an inducement to it. Indeed, prayer is an ascribing of glory to God, as the fountain of all we enjoy ; and without this, it would be an affront to the divine Majesty to expect any blessing from him. This remark is applicable to prayer in general, and, in particular, to our making supplication for outward blessings.

What is prayed for in the Fourth Petition.

We shall now consider the subject of the petition, or what we are to understand when we say, ' Give us this day our daily bread.'

^m John vi. 35.

^q Psal. cxxxii. 15.

ⁿ Verse 51.

^r Job vii. 15.

^o Gen. iii. 19.

^s Deut. viii. 18.

^p Isa. xxxiii. 16.

^t Prov. xxii. 2.

1. The thing prayed for is bread ; whereby our Saviour intimates, that we are to set due bounds to our desires, when we are pressing after outward blessings. He does not order us to be importunate with God for the great things of this life ; but rather for those things which are necessary,—in the enjoyment of which we may be better enabled to glorify him. He does not put his followers upon asking crowns and sceptres, as though his kingdom were of this world. Some, indeed, who were influenced by carnal motives, fondly imagined that his kingdom was of an earthly kind, and were ready to expect that many worldly advantages would accrue from their adhering to him ; and, when they found themselves mistaken, they shamefully deserted his cause, and relinquished the profession which they once made of him. But Christ never gave his people ground to expect that their secular interest should be promoted by embracing the gospel. Accordingly, when any one seemed desirous of being his disciple, he generally put the trying question to him, Whether was he content to leave all, and follow him, or to lead a mean life in the world, and be hated of all men for his name's sake ? His disciples, indeed, were sometimes filled with too great solicitude about their future circumstances in life. But he encourages them to hope for necessary provisions, when he says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'^u It is always found, too, that where there is the greatest degree of faith, it tends to moderate our affections as to the things of this world ; and if at any time they are apt to exceed their due bounds, it gives a check to them, as the prophet says to Baruch : 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.'^x We have an admirable instance of this in Jacob. When he was in a most destitute condition, fleeing from his father's house to Padan-aram, not knowing what entertainment he should meet with there ; the principal thing which he desires, together with the divine presence and protection, is that he might have 'bread to eat, and raiment to put on.'^y He does not ask that people and nations might bow down to him, or that God would take away the life of his brother Esau, whose malicious design against him occasioned his present hazardous journey ; he is not anxiously concerned for the great things of this world, but only desires that he may have the necessities of life. And Agar's prayer is not unlike this ; he says, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me.'^z Such a frame of spirit our Saviour supposes those to have who address themselves to God in prayer for bread, or the outward accommodations of life.

2. What we pray for is called 'our bread.' The meaning of this, is, that there is a distinct property which every one has, by the allotment of providence, in those outward blessings which God has given him, whatever be the measure or proportion of them. This we are taught to acknowledge with thankfulness, as if we should say, 'Thou didst not design that one man should take possession of the whole world, or engross to himself all its stores ; and that the rest should starve and perish for want of the necessities of life. In the arrangement thou hast made, thy wisdom and sovereignty appear ; and to this it is owing that there are some things which we have a right to, distinct from others,—not without thy providence, but by its gift and blessing.' Hence, whatever God thinks fit that we should receive, we call our own, and as such, pray for it. But whatever God does not think fit that we should receive, we are not in the least to desire or covet ; inasmuch as we are taught to pray for that only which we may call ours, as having a natural or civil right to it, which we have not to that which belongs to another. Now there are two ways, more especially included in this petition, by which we are said to receive, from the hand of God, outward blessings which we may call our own.

God, by his distinguishing hand, gives us that measure of outward blessings which he sees convenient for us ; and he does this either by giving success to our endeavours, or by supplying our wants in some way which was altogether unexpected by us, and thereby making provision for the comfort of our lives. There is sometimes a chain of providences leading to this result. Thus God speaks of his 'hearing the heavens ;'^a that, when they want store of water, he may furnish them with it, and 'they may hear the earth,' so as to moisten it with showers, when parched, and be-

coming unfruitful ; and ' that the earth may hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil,' so as to produce them ; and that ' these may hear,' that is, may be distributed among God's people, as he sees they want them. And the psalmist says, ' He watereth the hills from his chambers. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth fruit out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine ; and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.'^b Hence, there are various causes and effects subservient to one another, which are all owing to the blessing of providence, whereby we come to possess that portion of the good things of this life which is allotted for us.

Again, the outward blessings of this life may be called ours, when God is pleased to make them blessings to us, and give us the enjoyment of them. He must add his blessing to all the mercies he bestows, else they will not conduce to our happiness, or answer the general end designed by them. Without the divine blessing, the bread we eat would no more nourish us than husks or chaff ; our garments could no more contribute to our being warm, than if they were put upon a statue ; and the air we breathe would rather stifle than refresh us. Thus it is said, ' Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God ;'^c that is, it is not merely by second causes, or the use of means, but by the blessing of God, or his power and providence, that life and health are sustained. Moreover, it is God alone who can give us the comfortable enjoyment of the things of this life. This all have not. Their tables are plentifully furnished, but they want that measure of health which is necessary for their receiving advantage from them. Thus it is said of the sick man, that ' his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.'^d Such do, as it were, starve in the midst of plenty. And there are others who, though they have a great deal of the world, and are not hindered from the enjoyment of it by the weakness or decays of nature, yet are made unhappy by the temper of their own minds. There are some, for example, who abound in riches, who may, nevertheless, be said to be poor ; because they want an heart to use what they have, which is God's peculiar blessing. Accordingly, the wise man says, ' Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God.'^e For the lawful things of this life, then, and the divine blessing upon them, we are dependent on God ; and the asking of them is what we mean, when we pray that God would ' give us our bread.'

3. We are farther taught to pray, that God would give us our bread ' this day ;' thereby denoting that we are to desire to have our present necessities supplied, as those who cannot be certain that we shall live till to-morrow. How often does God break the thread of our lives in an instant, without giving us any notice beforehand ! We may truly say that in the midst of life we are in death ; and we are advised to take no thought for the morrow, but to leave that entirely to the providence of God. Food nourishes but for a day ; so that what we now receive will not suffice us to-morrow. Nature is always craving supplies ; and therefore we are taught to have a continual recourse to God by prayer for them. If we look farther than the present time, we are to do so with the condition that the Lord has determined to prolong our lives, and has rendered it necessary for us to pray for those things which will be needful for the support of it. Our praying on this condition seems to be the meaning of that variation of expression which occurs in the evangelist Luke, ' Give us day by day our daily bread ;'^f and it may obviate an inference which will be drawn by some, that if we are not to pray for what respects our future condition in this world, we are not to make provision for it. But not to make provision for the future is contrary to what we are exhorted to do, when we are called to consider the provision which the smallest insects make for their subsistence : ' The ant provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.'^g And the apostle says, ' If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'^h We hence

^b Psal. civ. 13—15.

^f Luke xi. 3.

^c Deut. viii. 3

^g Prov. vi. 8.

^d Job xxxiii. 20.

^h 1 Tim. v. 8.

^e Eccl. v. 19.

ought to make provision for our future wants. Accordingly, we are to pray that God would give success to our lawful endeavours, in order to the attainment of this end. We must pray thus, however, with the limitation of our maintaining a constant sense that our times are in his hand. Hence, whether he should be pleased to grant us a longer or a shorter lease of our lives, which to us is altogether uncertain, we are to beg of him that we may never be destitute of what is necessary for our glorifying him while on earth.

4. This petition is to be considered as having reference to others as well as to ourselves. By the words, 'Give us,' &c., we express a concern for their advantage, in what respects the good things of this life. The blessings of providence flow from an inexhaustible fountain; and therefore we are not to think that, by desiring that others may have a supply of their wants, there will not be enough remaining for us. Now, our being bound to pray for the good of others, should always teach us to bear our part in relieving them, that they may not, through our neglect, perish for want of the necessities of this life. Thus we are exhorted 'to deal our bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out to our houses; and when we see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide ourselves from our own flesh.'ⁱ Job having been severely accused by his friends, as though all the afflictions which befell him were in judgment for his having oppressed and 'forsaken the poor,' and 'violently taken away an house which he builded not,' as Zophar insinuates,^k vindicates himself from the charge in the strongest terms, when he says, 'I have not withheld the poor from their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail; nor eaten my morsel myself alone, so that the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; nor seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering.'^l This is not only to pray that God would give others their daily bread, but to help them, so far as it is in our power; and thus to help them is very agreeable to what we pray for in their behalf, as well as our own, when we say, as in this petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

Thus concerning the matter of the petition, as explained in this Answer. We shall give a summary account of it in the following meditation, which may be of use for the reducing of our Saviour's direction into practice:—"Our eyes wait on thee, O thou Preserver of men, who givest to all their meat in due season. We are poor, indigent creatures, whose necessities oblige us to request a daily supply for our outward as well as our spiritual wants. Thou hast granted us life and favour; and, having obtained help from thee, we continue unto this day. Thou preparest a table for us; our cup runneth over; we have never been wholly destitute of those outward blessings which tend to make our pilgrimage through this world easy and comfortable. We therefore adore thee for the care and goodness of thy providence, which continues to us forfeited blessings. We have, by our sins, deserved to be deprived of all the good things we enjoy; which we have not used to thy glory as we ought to have done. We acknowledge ourselves less than the least of all thy mercies; yet thou hast encouraged us to pray and hope for the continuance of them. We leave it to thine infinite wisdom, to choose that condition of life which thou seest best for us. It is not the great things of this world that we are solicitous about, but that portion of it which is necessary to our glorifying thee in life. We desire, agreeably to what thou hast enjoined as our duty, to use that industry which is necessary to attain a comfortable subsistence in the world; yet we are sensible that the success of our endeavours is wholly owing to thy blessing. We therefore beg that thou wouldst prosper our undertakings; since it is thy blessing alone that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. Keep our desires after the world within their due bounds; and enable us to be content with what thou art pleased to allot for us, that our hearts may not be turned aside from an earnest pursuit after that bread which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life. If thou art pleased to give us the riches of this world, let not our hearts be set upon them. But if thou hast ordained that we should be in low circumstances, may the frame of our spirits be suited to them; and may they be so sanctified that it may appear that we are not too low to be the objects of thy special regard and

i Isa. lviii. 7.

k Job xx. 19.

l Chap. xxxi. 16—19.

discriminating grace,—that, having nothing, we may really possess all things, in having an interest in thy love. As to our future condition in this world, though thou hast made it our duty to use a provident care that we may not be reduced to those straits which would render the last stage of life uncomfortable; yet we would do this with a constant sense of the uncertainty of life, since our times are in thy hand, our circumstances in the world at thy disposal,—and we rejoice that they are so. Therefore we earnestly beg that, if it be thy sovereign will to call us soon out of it, we may be as well pleased to leave, as ever we were to enjoy it, as being blessed with a well-grounded hope of a better life. And, if it be consistent with thy will that our lives be prolonged in the world, ‘Give us day by day our daily bread,’ that we may, at all times, experience that thou dost abundantly bless our provision, and satisfy us with those things which thou seest needful for us, till we come to our journey’s end, and are possessed of that perfect blessedness which thou hast reserved for thy saints in a better world.”

THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCIV. *What do we pray for in the fifth petition?*

ANSWER. In the fifth petition, which is, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” acknowledging that we, and all others, are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt; we pray for ourselves and others, that God of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in his Beloved, continue his favour and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness, which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we, from the heart, forgive others their offences.

HAVING been directed, in the former petition, to pray for outward blessings, we are now led to ask for forgiveness of sin. It is with very good reason that these two petitions are joined together; inasmuch as we cannot expect that God should give us the good things of this life, which are all forfeited by us, much less that we should have them bestowed on us in mercy and for our good, unless he is pleased to forgive those sins whereby we provoke him to withhold them from us. Nor can we take comfort in any outward blessings, while our consciences are burdened with a sense of the guilt of sin, and we have nothing to expect, as the consequence of it, but to be separated from his presence. Hence, we are taught to pray that God would ‘forgive us our sins,’ as one evangelist expresses it, or our ‘debts,’ as it is in the other.

It may be here observed, in general, that sin is a debt. As contrary to the holiness of God, it is a stain and blemish, a dishonour and reproach to us; as a violation of his law, it is a crime; and as involving us in guilt, it is called ‘a debt.’ This is the principal thing considered in this petition. There was a debt of obedience demanded from us as creatures; and in case of the failure of it, or of our committing any other sin, there was a threatening denounced in terms of the sanction of the law, whence arises a debt of punishment. Now, it is in the latter respect that we are directed, more especially, in this petition, to pray for forgiveness. There are several things regarding the nature of forgiveness, as founded on the satisfaction given by Christ, as our surety, which have been largely insisted on under some former Answers.^m Hence, in considering the subject of this petition, we shall, first, take a view of sinful man as charged with guilt, and rendered uneasy under a sense of it; secondly, we shall consider how he is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness; and thirdly, we shall show the encouragement which he has to hope that his prayer will be answered. Under this last head we shall take occasion to consider how far that disposition which we have to forgive others, is an evidence of our prayer for forgiveness having been heard.

^m See Sect. ‘The Reality of the Atonement,’ under Quest. xlv. See also Quest. lxx, lxxi.

Man's Uneasiness under a Sense of Guilt.

We are first to consider the charge of guilt which is upon us, and that uneasiness which is the consequence of it. Here we view the sinner as apprehended and standing before God, the Judge of all. An accusation is brought in against him; he is charged with apostacy and rebellion against his rightful Lord and Sovereign; his nature is, in consequence, represented as vitiated and depraved, his heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; whence proceed all actual transgressions, with their respective aggravations, which, according to the tenor of the law of God, deserve his wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.ⁿ This charge is made good against him by such convincing evidence, that he must be very much unacquainted with himself, and a stranger to the law of God, if he does not see its truth. But if we suppose him stupid, and persisting in his own vindication, through the blindness of his mind, and hardness of his heart, and ready to say with Ephraim, 'In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin;'^o the charge will, notwithstanding, appear to be just, his mouth shall be stopped, and he shall be forced to confess himself guilty before God. His conscience is now awakened, and he trembles at the thoughts of falling into the hands of an absolute God, who appears no otherwise to him than as a consuming fire. His terrors set themselves in array against him, and cannot but fill him with the greatest anguish, especially as there is no method which he can find out to free himself from the misery which he dreads. If he pretends to extenuate his crimes, his excuses will not avail him; and if his own conscience does not come in as a witness against him, as having been a party concerned in the rebellion, its being silent is an evidence of its having been rendered stupid by a continuance in sin. Nothing which it can allege in its own vindication, will be regarded in the court of heaven, but will rather tend to add weight to the guilt he has contracted; for the omniscience of God will bring in an unanswerable charge against him, as a transgressor of his law, and liable to condemnation, and then vindictive justice will demand satisfaction. If the sinner make an overture to pay the debt, he must either yield sinless obedience, which is impossible from the nature of the thing, or bear the stroke of justice, and suffer the punishment due to him; and if he is content to do the latter, he knows not what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, or to be plunged into an abyss of endless misery. If he think that he shall be secure by fleeing from justice, he will find every attempt to flee from it vain; for God is omnipresent, and 'there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.'^p Nothing therefore remains but that he make supplication to his Judge, that he would pass by the crimes he has committed, without demanding satisfaction. But to do this is to desire that he would act contrary to the holiness of his nature; which would be such a blemish on his perfections, that he is obliged to reject the suit, or else must cease to be God. What would his pardoning crime without satisfaction be, but to relinquish his throne, deny his sovereignty, and act contrary to his own law, which is the rule of his government? Sinners, besides, would take occasion to transgress, expecting that they may do with so impunity. But, is there no intercessor who will plead the sinner's cause, or appear for him in the court of heaven? There can be no such intercessor but one who is able to make an atonement, and thereby secure the glory of divine justice, by having the debt transferred or placed to his account, and giving a full satisfaction for it. But this work belongs to none but our Lord Jesus Christ, who has obtained redemption and forgiveness through his blood. Now, no one can take encouragement from what he has done but he who addresses himself to God by faith. But we are now considering the sinner as destitute of faith, and therefore the charge of guilt remains upon him. And it is certain that the consequence is such as tends to fill him with the greatest uneasiness under the burden which lies on his conscience; so that he has a perpetual dread of the execution of the sentence which is in force against him. His spirit is wounded; and it is impossible for any one to apply to him healing medicines, but by directing him, ac-

according to the prescription contained in the gospel, to seek forgiveness in that way in which God applies it in and through a Mediator.

How a Sinner is to ask Forgiveness.

We are now to consider how a person is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness. This is the principal topic exhibited in this petition. Here it is to be acknowledged that, when we draw nigh to God, we do so with a sense of guilt, and, it may be, with great distress of conscience arising from it. Yet this sense of guilt differs very much from what was observed under the last Head, when we considered a sinner as standing before an absolute God, without any hope of obtaining forgiveness. What such a person suffers is dread and horror ; but his drawing near to God under the sense of guilt of which we now speak, is an expedient for his obtaining a settled peace of conscience. Indeed, there is nothing of greater importance, than our performing this duty in a right manner.

1. Let it be considered, then, that when we pray for forgiveness of sin, it is supposed that none can bestow this blessing upon us but God. No one has a right to forgive an offence, but he against whom it is committed. Sin is a neglect or refusal to pay the debt of obedience which is due from us to God ; and consequently it would be an invading of his right, for any one who had no power to demand payment of that debt to pretend to give a discharge to the sinner, as an insolvent debtor. This would be to act like the person mentioned in the parable, who was appointed, indeed, to receive his lord's debts, but not to cancel them ; and therefore our Saviour calls him 'an unjust steward ;' and he is said to have 'wasted his lord's goods,' by compounding without his order, the debts which were owing to him.^q Now, as obedience is a religious duty, it is due to God alone. It is only he who can give a discharge to those who have not performed it. As it belongs to him as a Judge and Lawgiver to punish offenders, it would be the highest affront to him for a creature to pretend to this prerogative. Hence, God appropriates it to himself, when he says, 'I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake ;'^r an expression which is to be understood of him exclusive of all others. Accordingly, when the Jews charged our Saviour with blasphemy on his forgiving sins, and said, 'Who can forgive sins but God only ?'^s the proposition was true, how false soever the inference was which they deduced from it to disprove his Deity.

2. We shall now consider that all ought to pray for forgiveness, and in what sense they are to do so. That all ought to pray for forgiveness, one would think is so evident, so agreeable to the condition of fallen man, so obviously founded on many scriptures, and expressly commanded in the petition which we are explaining, that it is needless to give a farther proof of it. Yet, some have asserted that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin, since he already enjoys it. This is an inference from what they advance as to actual justification being from eternity. They hence suppose that it is as absurd for a justified person to pray that God would forgive him, as it is to pray that he would choose him to eternal life, or that Christ would satisfy the divine justice for the sins of his people, which he has already done. It is, indeed, not very easy to understand what some persons mean, when they insist on this subject ; for they lay down propositions, without sufficiently explaining them. And while they allege in their own vindication that they intend nothing but what is agreeable to the sentiments of the reformed churches, it is certain that they advance several things, or, at least, make use of unguarded expressions, which are altogether disowned by these churches ; and, at the same time, they give occasion to some to run into the contrary extreme, who, for fear of being thought to assert eternal justification, deny the eternal purpose of God relating to it.—But whatever they intend, when they say that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin ; the contrary to this opinion is sufficiently evident from scripture. For, as every believer is a justified person, any instances which we have of believers praying for the pardon of sin, sufficiently confute the absurd notion which we are opposing. Now, that many have prayed for pardon of sin, who have,

^q Luke xvi. 1. et seq.

^r Isa. xliii. 25.

^s Mark ii. 7.

at the same time, been true believers, is evident from David's praying for the pardon of sin, as he often does. Thus he says, 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great;' ^t and yet, at the same time, he expresses himself like a justified person, 'O my God, I trust in thee,' ^u and, 'Thou art the God of my salvation.' ^x Again, he prays, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;' ^y yet, at the same time, he appears to be a believer; for he speaks of his 'trusting in God,' and 'lifting up his soul to him,' ^z and 'fleeing to him,' that he would 'hide him,' ^a which are all acts of justifying faith. Again, he prays, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions;' ^b 'hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.' ^c Yet he had had a previous intimation from God, that he had pardoned his sin. ^d This appears from the preface to the psalm in which this prayer occurs; so that the Spirit of God put words into his mouth, and taught him, notwithstanding the assurance he had had from him of his having obtained forgiveness, to pray for it. Moreover, the apostle Paul was in a justified state, when he expressed his earnest desire of being 'found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' ^e Besides, that justified persons ought to pray for forgiveness, might be argued from all those scriptures which represent believers as praying for salvation; for they cannot pray for salvation without praying for forgiveness of sin, as being inseparably connected with it. I shall therefore add no more concerning the obligation which all are under, to pray for the pardon of sin.

I now proceed to consider in what sense we are to pray for forgiveness. This may without much difficulty be determined, if we rightly state the doctrine of justification. If justification be considered as an immanent act in God, or as the eternal purpose of his will not to impute sin, which is what divines call decretive justification, it is to be allowed that it is no more to be prayed for than eternal election. Nor are we to pray that Christ may be constituted the Head and Surety of his elect, or that he might finish transgressions, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, for that is already done. But the scripture often speaks of justification as consisting in the application of Christ's righteousness, or in the right which we have to lay claim to it. This is styled justification by faith, and is the only foundation on which we build our hope, that we have an interest in what Christ did and suffered, and are thereby discharged from guilt and condemnation. But this justification cannot take place before we believe; and in this sense we pray that God would justify us. Now, as forgiveness of sin is a branch of justification, it is in this sense that we pray for the pardon of sin. [See Note 2 D, page 643.]

In praying for forgiveness, we express an earnest desire that God would not lay those sins to our charge which we daily commit, or that he would not, as the psalmist says, 'enter into judgment with us,' ^f and, in consequence, that he would not punish us as our iniquities deserve. We thus pray for the application of Christ's righteousness, as the ground and foundation of our claim to forgiveness. Again, we are to pray for the comfortable fruits and effects of forgiveness, that 'being justified by faith, we may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand;' ^g or that we may be able to conclude that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved, and that Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Further, we are to pray for the assurance or comfortable sense of forgiveness, so that we may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And, inasmuch as we daily contract guilt, we are to pray that this blessing may be daily applied to us, and that, both living and dying, we may be dealt with as those who are interested in Christ's righteousness as our Surety and Redeemer.

It may be objected that these blessings are what every believer has; and that

^t Psal. xxv. 11.

^z Psal. cxlii. 8.

^d 2 Sam. xii. 13.

^u Verse 2.

^a Verse 9.

^e Phil. iii. 9.

^x Verse 5.

^b Psal. li. 1.

^f Psal. cxliii. 2.

^y Psal. cxliii. 2.

^c Verse 9.

^g Rom. v. 1, 2.

therefore he ought not to pray for them. I answer, that there are many privileges which God does or certainly will bestow upon his people, which they are, nevertheless, to pray for; otherwise they who are in a state of grace, are not to pray for perseverance in grace, because they are assured that it shall be maintained unto salvation, according to God's promise. Indeed, whatever promises are contained in the covenant of grace, a believer ought not, according to this objection, to pray that God would apply them to him, and so glorify his faithfulness in accomplishing them, since he is certainly persuaded that he will do it. Yet, all allow that we are to pray for the fulfilment to us of these promises. Hence, even if we have a full assurance that God has forgiven our sins, yet, as we daily contract guilt, we are daily to pray that he would not lay it to our charge, or deal with us as our iniquities deserve.

3. We shall now consider how we are to address ourselves to God, or what views we are to have of him when we pray for forgiveness of sin. This depends on the idea we have of those perfections which he glorifies in bestowing this privilege. These are, more especially, his mercy, grace, and faithfulness, in accomplishing what he has promised in the covenant of grace. As for his justice, it is considered, as will be observed under a following Head, as having received full satisfaction. It is concerned, however, in the purchase, not in the application of forgiveness. God, indeed, appears, in respect to it, with the glory of a Judge resolving to make no abatements of the debt which was contracted, that so he may express his utmost detestation of the sins committed. In this sense, forgiveness is not to be obtained by entreaty; for it is inconsistent with the character of a Judge, to be moved by entreaty, and contrary to the demands of law and justice. But, on the other hand, when we draw nigh to him, we consider him as a Father who delights in mercy, as is particularly intimated in the preface to this prayer; and therefore we do not come before him as summoned to stand at his tribunal, and to be weighed in the balance by him. Were we in this position, we should be found wanting; and, if our iniquities should be marked by him, we could not stand. But we consider ourselves as invited to come into his presence, in hope of obtaining forgiveness; and we consider him as he has revealed himself in the gospel, in which we are told that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, not as the criminal fears his judge, who is ready to pass sentence upon him, but as a child comes into his father's presence with such a fear as proceeds from love, and is the result of the encouragement which is given him that he shall be accepted in his sight. The great inducement to our thus approaching God, is the intimation he has given of his love, in the promises of the covenant of grace, particularly in those which respect forgiveness. There he has discovered himself as a God ready to pardon, 'gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness;' ^h with whom is 'plenteous redemption.' ⁱ He also styles himself, 'Our God, who will abundantly pardon,' inasmuch as 'his thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth.' ^k He has likewise promised that he will 'cast all the sins' of his people 'into the depths of the sea.' Hence, we consider him, in forgiving our sins, not only as glorifying his mercy, but as 'performing his truth,' and acting agreeably to his faithfulness. ^l And all this depends entirely on the discoveries he has made of himself to us through a Mediator.

4. We are thus led to consider the way in which God bestows forgiveness, and in which we are to seek it at his hand by faith and prayer. We formerly observed that it would be an affront to the divine Majesty, to suppose that he will extend mercy to guilty sinners, without securing the glory of his vindictive justice; and the securing of this depends wholly on the satisfaction which was given by Christ. Hence, we are to beg forgiveness for his sake, whom God has 'set forth to be a propitiation for sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' Accordingly, we are first considered as having his righteousness imputed to us; and then this blessing which we pray for is applied to us. In this method of praying for forgiveness, we take occasion to adore the wisdom of God, which has found out this expedient to hallow or sanctify his own name, as well as

^h Neh. ix. 17.

Psal. cxxx. 7.

^k Isa. lv. 7—9.^l Micah vii. 19, 20.

to secure to us an interest in his love ; and, at the same time, we express the high esteem we have for the person of Christ, who has procured it for us, and also our sense of the infinite value of the price he paid in order to procure it. We refer our cause to him, that, as our Advocate, he would appear on our behalf, in the merit of his obedience and sufferings ; that our petition may be granted in such a way, that God may have the highest revenue of glory redounding to himself, and that we may receive the consequent blessings.

We are now to consider the frame of spirit with which we are to pray for forgiveness. There is no grace but what is to be exercised in prayer, agreeably to the subject of it. In particular, it is evident, from the nature of the thing, that when we pray for forgiveness, it ought to be with a penitent frame of spirit. Accordingly, repentance and forgiveness of sins are often connected in scripture. Thus it is said, ‘ Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.’^m We are not to suppose, indeed, that repentance, or any other grace, is the cause of God’s secret purpose or determination to forgive sin, or that he accepts of it as any part of that atonement or satisfaction which his justice requires to be made for it ; for to suppose this is to ascribe that to repentance which belongs entirely to Christ’s righteousness. Repentance, however, is so far necessary to forgiveness, that it would be a very preposterous thing for any one to ask this favour either of God or of man without it. Not to repent of a crime committed, is, in effect, a pleading for it, and a tacit resolution to persist in it, and, in consequence, disqualifies us from pleading for a pardon. Besides, it would be contrary to the divine perfections for God to give pardon to those who, in this manner do, as it were, practically disown their need of it. Moreover, the necessity of repentance, in those who are praying and hoping for forgiveness, appears from the connection which there is between it and all other graces. These, though distinguished, are not separated from it ; and they are all necessary to salvation,—which we can, by no means attain, without being forgiven.

The Connexion between forgiving others and enjoying forgiveness from God.

We proceed to consider the encouragement that they, who plead for forgiveness, with the exercise of faith, repentance, and other graces, have to expect, that they shall be heard and answered ; and, more particularly, how far the disposition which we have to forgive others, is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness from God.

Grace exercised, is an evidence of forgiveness. That it is so appears from the fact that it is a work and fruit of the Spirit, a branch of sanctification, and an earnest of eternal life. In this respect, that good work may be truly said to be begun, which God will certainly carry on, and perfect in glory. Every grace, I say, provided it be true and genuine, is an evidence of our right to forgiveness, or justification. Accordingly the apostle says, ‘ Whom he called, them he justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.’ⁿ

We are now to consider how far, or in what respect, our exercising forgiveness towards others, is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness from God ; which is the sense given in this Answer, of those words, ‘ as we forgive our debtors.’ We may here observe the variation of the expression in Matthew and Luke. In the former it is, ‘ Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ;’ and in the latter, ‘ Forgive us our sins ; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.’ There is a little difficulty contained in the sense of the particles ‘ as’ and ‘ for ;’ and these must be so explained that the sense of the petition, in both evangelists, may appear to be the same. When Matthew says, ‘ Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,’ the particle ‘ as’ is a note, not of equality, but of similitude. Accordingly, it signifies that we are to forgive others, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, or as we hope to obtain forgiveness from him. If, indeed, we compare our forgiveness of others with God’s forgiveness of us, there is an infinite disproportion between them, as to the injuries forgiven, and the circumstances attending the act

of forgiveness. The injuries done to us are very small, if compared with the crimes which we commit against God ; and when we are said to forgive them, there is no comparison between our forgiveness and that which we desire from the hand of God. God's forgiving us is, indeed, a motive to us to forgive others ; but the one is not the measure or standard of the other. Hence, the petition implies that, while we ask for forgiveness, we ought to do so with a becoming frame of spirit, as those who are inclined to forgive others, and, at the same time, to bless God that he has wrought this disposition in us. So far as we make use of our forgiving others as an argument in prayer, the meaning is, that as God has made it our duty to forgive others, and we trust has also given us grace to do so, we hope that he will, in like manner, ' forgive us our trespasses.' The petition as laid down by the evangelist Luke, ' Forgive us our sins ; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us,' is, in substance, the same as laid down in Matthew, and as now explained. The particle 'for' is not causal, but demonstrative. Hence, we are not to understand it as though our forgiving others were the ground and reason of God's forgiving us ; for to do this would be to put it in the room of Christ's righteousness. But the meaning is, that we are encouraged to hope that he will forgive us, from the demonstrative evidence he has afforded us of his disposition to forgive, in his having bestowed upon us that grace which inclines and disposes us to forgive others. For from his having given us that grace, we have ground to conclude that we shall obtain the blessing for which we pray. We are thus led to consider the nature and extent of forgiveness, as exercised by us, and our obligation to perform this duty ; and when our performing it may be said to be an evidence of our obtaining forgiveness from God.

1. As to the nature and extent of forgiveness, there are some things to be premised. The injuries which are done us, are to be considered as either an invasion or a denial of those rights which belong to us, agreeably to the station and condition in life in which the providence of God has fixed us. Any such invasion must be reckoned an injury, because it is detrimental to us, and an act of injustice. It may also be considered as a crime committed against God, inasmuch as it infers a violation of the law of nature, which is stamped with his authority. By this law, the rights of every particular person are determined ; and to deprive us of them, is a sin against God, in the same sense in which sins immediately committed against men are said to be committed against him.—Again, injuries are to be forgiven by us, only as they are against ourselves. God alone can forgive them as they are against him. The reason is, that no one can dispense with that punishment which is due for the violation of a law but he who gave it. The precept which is to be obeyed, and the sanction which binds over the offender to suffer for his violation of it, must be established by the same authority. Hence, as the creature cannot demand that obedience which is due to God alone ; so, for the same reason, he cannot remit that debt of punishment which belongs only to God to inflict. We are to desire, however, that God would pardon, rather than punish, those who have injured us. Our doing this is the only sense in which we may be said to forgive others those crimes that are committed against God ; if, indeed, our doing it may be called forgiveness. But so far as any injury respects ourselves, as being detrimental to us, it is our duty to forgive it, and not to exercise that private revenge which is inconsistent with the scope of this petition.—Again, so far as an injury which more especially respects ourselves, includes a violation of human laws, so that the offender has rendered himself obnoxious to a capital punishment ; it does not belong to us, as private persons, to forgive the criminal, so as to obstruct the course of justice. This matter does not concern us, as we have not the executive part of human laws in our power. To pretend to this executive power, would be not only to violate the laws of men, but to commit an offence against God, who has established the just rights of civil government. Hence, that forgiveness which we are obliged to exercise towards others, does not extend to injuries which violate human laws. Nor are we obliged, when we forgive those who have injured us, to be unconcerned about doing justice to ourselves, when it is possible, or at least easy, for us to have redress in the course of law or equity ; especially if the damage we sustain be, in a very great degree, prejudicial to ourselves

or families. If an injury affect our good name in the world, the forgiving of it is not inconsistent with our using endeavours to vindicate our own reputation; though, it may be, we can hardly do this without exposing him who has done us the injury, to suffer that shame which he has brought on himself by his calumnies.

These things being premised, we proceed to consider the nature and extent of forgiveness, as it is to be exercised by us, so far as the injury committed respects ourselves. This forgiveness is opposed to our bearing the least degree of malice against the offender, or carrying our resentments too far, by magnifying lesser injuries, and meditating revenge. Nor ought we to be so partial in our own cause, as to deny or altogether overlook those things which are, in other respects, commendable in him; as though a crime committed against us were altogether inconsistent with the least degree of virtue or goodness in him who has committed it. His having done injustice to us, does not excuse any act of injustice to his person or character in instances which have not an immediate relation to ourselves. To look at him in his other conduct in the light of his injury against us, is to see things through a false medium, or to infer consequences which cannot fairly be deduced from any thing which he has done, how injurious soever it may have been to us. Moreover, we are not to take occasion, from the ill treatment we have met with from any one, to endeavour to ruin him, as to his estate or character in the world. For to act thus is not a proper expedient, either to do justice to ourselves, or to bring him who has done us the injury to repentance.

Here we may take occasion to inquire, how far a person who is injured by another may demand satisfaction; and whether it is our duty to forgive him, though it be neither in his power nor in his inclination to make satisfaction. The answer which I would give is, that the law of God and nature does not prohibit us from demanding satisfaction in proportion to the injury received; satisfaction being a debt which we ought to claim, in justice to ourselves and our character in the world. It may sometimes, however, be out of the offender's power to make full satisfaction. In this case we must be content, and forgive the injury, without it; and we are to deal with him, as we are obliged to do with those who are insolvent in pecuniary debts. On the other hand, the person who has injured us may be able, at least, in some measure to make satisfaction; but he is so far from being willing to do so, that he refuses to acknowledge his crime, and, what is still worse, seems inclined, as occasion may offer, to commit it again. This is the worst of tempers; especially if the injury be not merely supposed, but real. Yet the temper of the offender is no rule for us to proceed by, in forgiving injuries. For understanding this, let it be considered that satisfaction for injuries committed, consists either in making a compensation in proportion to the damage sustained, or in a mere acknowledgment of the fault committed. The former we may, in justice, insist on; though in most cases, where the injury respects only ourselves, it may be dispensed with or demanded at pleasure. But whether it be given or not, it is so far our duty to pass it by, as not to bear the least degree of malice against him who has injured us. In the latter kind of satisfaction, no more is demanded than a mere acknowledgment of the offence committed, which cannot be supposed to be out of the power of the offender; but he is resolved that he will not make it, he persists in his own vindication, and determines to do the same injury as occasion offers. Now, we are to let him know that he sins, not only against us, but against God, and to exhort him to confess his crime before him; and therefore we pity his obstinacy, while we express our readiness to pass by the injury he has done us. Yet out of a principle of self-preservation, such an one is not to be chosen by us as an intimate friend or associate, that he may not be in a capacity to injure us for the future, which his obstinacy discovers him to be inclined to do. Thus concerning the nature and extent of the duty of forgiving injuries.

2. We proceed to consider the indispensable obligation we are under to forgive injuries. Without practising this duty, we could not make that appeal to God which is contained in the petition we are considering, or take encouragement to hope that we shall obtain forgiveness from him. To induce us to perform it, let us consider that if God should deal with us as we do with our fellow-creatures, when we refuse to forgive them, we should be for ever miserable. This our Saviour

illustrates by the parable of the debtor and creditor.^o There a person is represented as 'owing ten thousand talents;' and 'his lord,' upon his entreaty, 'forgave him the debt.' Afterwards the person dealt severely with one who owed him but 'an hundred pence;' and by doing so he provoked his lord to 'deliver him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.' Though this parable does not argue the least mutability in the divine purpose relating to forgiveness; yet we may infer from it how inconsiderable the injuries which are done us are, when compared with those which we have done against God; and how little ground we have to expect forgiveness from him, if we are not disposed to forgive others.—Again, an implacable spirit meditating revenge for injuries done against us, will render us altogether unfit for the performance of any holy duty, and particularly for imploring forgiveness from God. It also exposes us to many temptations. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of anger retained in our breasts, or 'letting the sun go down upon our wrath,' as that which 'gives place to the devil.'^p—Again, malice and fury tend to exasperate an enemy; while forgiveness melts him into friendship, and very much recommends the gospel, which obliges us to do acts of brotherly kindness, even where they are least deserved.—Further, we have many bright examples for our imitation, of the best men, who have been highly injured, and yet have expressed a forgiving spirit. Thus Joseph forgave the injuries done against him by his brethren. After his father's death, they were jealous that he would hate them, and requite them all the evil which they had done to him; but he not only comforted them and spake kindly to them, but made very liberal provision for the subsisting of them and their families.^q Moses, when Miriam was smitten with leprosy for speaking against him, prayed for her recovery.^r When the Syrian host was sent on purpose to destroy the prophet Elisha, and when God delivered them into his hand in the midst of Samaria, and the king of Israel was ready to smite them, had he desired it; he was so far from wishing them to be destroyed, that he said to the king, 'Thou shalt not smite them. Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.'^s In the New Testament, we have an instance of a forgiving spirit in Stephen, when, in the very agonies of death, having been before insulted, and now stoned by his enraged enemies, 'he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'^t But the highest instance which can be given of the exercise of this grace we have in our Saviour, who prayed for those who crucified him, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'^u These examples are worthy of our imitation; and therefore we should reckon ourselves obliged to forgive those who have injured us.

It will be objected by some, that the injuries done them are so very great, that they are not to be borne; that it would be dishonourable for them not to take any notice of them; or perhaps that the ingratitude expressed in them, is such as deserves the highest resentment; and that to pass over the injuries, might be reckoned a tacit approbation of them, and give occasion to the offenders to despise and injure them for the future. But if the injury be great, it will be much more commendable, and a greater instance of virtue and grace, to forgive than to resent it. In this case, a man overcomes himself, subdues his own passions, and so lets his enemy know that he has a due sense of the divine command relating to forgiveness, and that his spirit is sanctified and calmed by the power of divine grace. To act thus is reckoned one of the greatest victories. Accordingly, it is said, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.'^x As for our honour, which is pretended to be concerned in our forgiving injuries, they who allege it are very much mistaken in their sentiments about true honour. For it is said, 'The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.'^y Again, the forgiveness of injuries does not, in the least, argue that the person who forgives, ap-

^o Matt. xviii. 24, et seq.

^s 2 Kings vi. 22.

^y Prov. xix. 11.

^p Eph. iv. 26, 27.

^t Acts vii. 60.

^q Gen. l. 15—21.

^u Luke xxiii. 34.

^r Numb. xii. 13.

^x Prov. xvi. 32.

proves of his crime who has injured him. For our forgiving an offender is not inconsistent with our charging his sin on his conscience, and endeavouring to bring him under a sense of guilt, as having not only injured us, but done that which is highly displeasing to God. He may also be given to understand that he has wronged his own soul more than us, and therefore has great reason to be humbled before God, and repent of his sin committed against us, which, as it is committed against God, he only can forgive; though we let him know, that we are disposed to forgive him, so far as the crime is directed against us. As to the pretence that the forgiving of injuries will make those who have done them grow bold, and be more hardened in their crimes, and that they will take occasion from it to insult and injure us for the future, such a result very seldom follows. But if it should, we must consider that the ungrateful abuse of a kind and generous action, is no sufficient excuse for our not performing it. If, however, there be the least ingenuousness of temper, or if it pleases God, by his grace, to bless our kind behaviour towards them for their good, our forgiveness of their injuries will have a far different effect. Accordingly, it is observed, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.'^z Thus concerning the obligation we are under to forgive the injuries which are committed against us.

3. We are now to consider how our forgiveness of injuries is an evidence, or may afford us ground of hope, that we shall obtain forgiveness from God, when we are praying for it. Here let it be observed, that the forgiving of injuries may be considered merely as a virtue, proceeding from a goodness of temper, or from a sense of the equality and reasonableness of the duty, and from other motives which the light of nature may suggest, or, as it is recommended by Seneca, Epictetus, and other heathen moralists. Now, while the forgiving of injuries from such must be reckoned a very commendable quality, and a convincing evidence that a person is, in a great degree, master of his own passions; we cannot conclude from it that a person is in a state of grace; and nothing short of that can be an evidence of our right to forgiveness. Hence, we must consider the disposition to forgive injuries as a Christian virtue, or as containing some ingredients which manifest it to be a grace wrought in us by the Spirit, and a branch of sanctification, and, as such, having several other graces connected with it. Accordingly, when our forgiving injuries is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness, we must practise forgiveness out of an humble sense of the many crimes which we have committed against God. The disposition, therefore, is joined with the grace of repentance, and flows from it. Moreover, it contains several acts of faith. In forgiving injuries, we, in effect, acknowledge that all we have is in God's hand, who has a right to take it away when he pleases. If we are deprived of our reputation and usefulness in the world, or of our wealth and outward well-being by the injurious treatment we meet with from those who, without cause, are our enemies, we are sensible that what we suffer could not come upon us without God's permissive providence; and in this we entirely acquiesce. We wholly lay the injury or injustice done us to the charge of those who hate us; yet, in obedience to our Saviour's command, we desire to express our love to them in the most valuable acts, and, at the same time, to acknowledge and adore the sovereignty and justice of God in suffering us to be thus dealt with by men, and hoping and trusting that he will overrule this and all other afflictive providences for our good. Thus David says when he speaks of God's suffering Shimei to curse him: 'It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.'^a Further, when we forgive those who have injured us, we do so with an earnest desire that God would give them repentance; so that his name may be glorified, and his interest promoted, whatever becomes of our name and usefulness in the world. When we are enabled to exercise such a frame of spirit as this in forgiving those who have injured us, we have ground to hope that, when we pray for forgiveness, the great God, who is the Author of all that grace which we exercise in forgiving others, will grant us the invaluable privilege which we desire.

Having explained this petition, we shall now consider it as a directory, agree-

^z Prov. xv. 1.

^a 2 Sam. xvi. 12.

ably to which we may put up our requests to God. Accordingly, we are to cast ourselves before his footstool, with humble confession of sin, and imploring forgiveness from him, to this effect:—"We adore thee, O Lord, as a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, and hast revealed thy wrath from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. We acknowledge that we have, by our transgressions, become debtors to thy justice. Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens; and thereby we have deserved to be banished out of thy sight, and cast into the prison of hell, without hope of being released thence. We are not able to stand in judgment, and therefore we dread the thoughts of appearing before thine awful tribunal, as an absolute God. If thou shouldst contend with us, we cannot answer for the least sin that we have committed; and it would be an injury to thy justice, and an increasing of our guilt, to expect or desire that thou shouldst pardon our sins without receiving satisfaction for them, which we are sensible that we are not, nor ever shall be able to give thee. But we bless thy name that thou hast sent thy well-beloved Son into the world, who gave his life a ransom for thy people; by which means thy justice is satisfied, thy law fulfilled, and all thy perfections infinitely glorified. He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; which is to and upon all them that believe. Thou hast therefore given us leave and encouragement to come to thee by faith, to plead with thee for redemption and forgiveness through his blood, according to the riches of thy grace. In him thou art a God pardoning the iniquity, and passing by the transgressions of the remnant of thine heritage. We pray for this invaluable privilege as those who humbly hope and trust that we have those graces wrought in us, which are an evidence of our having Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for which we bless thee. In particular, we bless thee that thou hast enabled us to forgive all the injuries which are done us by our fellow-creatures; which are very small and inconsiderable, when compared with those affronts which we daily offer to thy Majesty. We beseech thee, grant that this and all other graces may more and more abound in us, that thereby our evidences of an interest in Christ's righteousness may be more strong and clear; that though we daily contract guilt by our transgressions, we may be enabled to conclude for our comfort, that there is no condemnation to us, and that iniquity shall not be our ruin."

[NOTE 2 D. *Prayer for Pardon.*—Prayer for justification, in any just or scriptural sense whatever of justification before God, is essentially of the same nature as prayer for regeneration; and either must be regarded as formal and unbelieving, or presupposes the possession of spiritual life,—a justified condition and a regenerated heart. The remarks made in a former note (See Note headed "Are unconverted persons to be exhorted to pray?" appended to Sect. "How the word is to be preached," under Quest. clx.) on prayer as a means of conversion, apply in all their force to prayer as an antecedent to justification. To exhort a person, therefore, to pray that he may be justified, will as much tend to obscure in his view the gospel's invitation to him to believe and live, as to exhort him to pray in order that he may be converted.

Prayer for pardon appears to me to derive its distinctive character from a very different source than the fact that justification includes the pardon of all past iniquity. Pardon is very often spoken of in scripture quite apart from justification; and if I am not mistaken, is always so spoken of when represented as a blessing to be asked by prayer. Viewed as included in justification, it is the removal of guilt as entirely forfeiting the divine complacency, and placing the sinner under unqualified condemnation; but viewed apart from justification, it is the pardon of particular offences, the forgiveness of sin committed by persons partially sanctified, the removal of guilt which, while it entails chastisement and stripes, does not occasion the withdrawal of God's covenant or promises of saving mercy. In the one view, it is a blessing once bestowed, ever complete, and conferred on the spiritually dead when they are made alive to God; in the other, it is a blessing daily needed, often received, and properly or exclusively bestowed upon erring and delinquent believers,—persons who, while justified and regenerated, are still so far under the influence of remaining corruption as in many things to transgress the divine law. In the former case, it is a result of Christ's atonement, or of the offering once for all which he made for taking away the sin of the world; in the latter, it is a result of his intercession,—of his continuing in the presence of God on behalf of his people, and ever living to plead the merits of his blood, that he may save on to the last point those who have come unto God by him. See Heb. vii. 25; iv. 15, 16; ix. 23, 24; Rom. viii. 33, 34. The parties, therefore, who pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' are 'disciples' who say, 'Our Father who art in heaven,'—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption in their hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father;' and they who 'come boldly to the throne of grace,

that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,' are those who 'have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,' and who are exhorted to 'hold fast their profession,' Heb. iv. 16, compared with verse 14.—ED.]

THE SIXTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCIV. *What do we pray for in the sixth petition ?*

ANSWER. In the sixth petition, which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," acknowledging that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things, that we may be assaulted, foiled, and, for a time, led captive by temptation, that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready, powerfully to draw us aside and ensnare us; and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations; but also, of ourselves, unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them, and worthy to be left under the power of them; we pray, that God would so overrule the world, and all in it; subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan; order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we, and all his people, may, by his providence, be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that, by his Spirit, we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation, or, when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof; that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil for ever.

The Meaning of the Word 'Temptation.'

OUR Saviour having, in the preceding petition, exhorted us to pray for forgiveness of sins, whereby the guilt of past crimes may be removed, advises us in this to pray against temptation, lest, being overcome by it, we should contract fresh guilt, and walk unbecomingly those who hope for or have obtained forgiveness from God. In order to our understanding this petition, it will be necessary for us to premise something tending to explain the word 'temptation.' This word may be taken in a good sense. Thus God himself is sometimes said to 'tempt,' or rather, which is all one, to 'try' his people. This he does by the various dispensations of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse. Sometimes also he does it by his commands, when he puts us upon the performance of difficult duties, that he may prove us, whether his fear is before us. In this respect he is said to have tempted Abraham, proved his faith, and discovered his readiness to obey his command in offering Isaac; and, after he had tried his faith, he commends him, when he says, 'Now I know that thou fearest God.'^b Sometimes likewise he is said to tempt or 'allure' to what is good,^c to invite his people to do those things which redound to his glory and their real interest. In this sense we may and ought to tempt others, or persuade, and, as much as in us lies, engage their affections to the performance of what is good. Thus the apostle advises us to 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.'^d We are not, however, to understand the word 'temptation' in these senses in this petition. Here it is to be understood of our being tempted to sin. In this respect God never tempts any one. Thus the apostle says, 'Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.'^e Nor ought we, in this sense, to tempt one another. These things being premised, we come more immediately to explain this petition. In doing this, we shall consider some things which are supposed, and also the subject of the petition.

What is supposed in the Sixth Petition.

1. When we are taught to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' it is supposed that man, in this imperfect state, is very much exposed to temptations. The world is always ready to present its lures which are suited to the corruption of our nature, and therefore too easily complied with. The influence of these lures is farther pro-

^b Gen. xxii. 1, 12.

^c Hos. ii. 14

^d Heb. x. 24.

^e James i. 13.

moted by Satan's suggestions, who is daily endeavouring to entangle us in the snare which is laid for us.

2. As we are daily tempted to sin, so we are in great danger of being overcome by temptation. This danger arises not only from the methods used to draw us aside from God, and the many secret snares laid for us which are not easily discerned, but principally from the treachery of our own hearts, which are deceitful above all things, and very apt to incline us to commit those sins which involve a great deal of guilt. It also proceeds sometimes from a want of watchfulness; in consequence of which the enemy comes upon us undiscovered, and we are overcome before we are aware. The temptation offers itself, and we are not only unable, but unwilling, to resist it; and if we have fallen by temptation, our fall tends still more to weaken us, so that we cannot recover ourselves from the pit into which we are plunged. We also find it very difficult, if God is pleased, at any time, to suffer us to fall by temptations, to improve our falls aright to his glory and our own good.

3. It is farther supposed, that God may suffer his people, though their sins are pardoned, and their souls sanctified, to be tempted, and sometimes even foiled and led captive for a time. Here let us consider in what sense he may be said to tempt his people, or lead them into temptation. This he does, without being the author of sin; and he does it either objectively or permissively. He does it objectively, when his providential dispensations, which in themselves are holy, just, and good, offer occasions of sin. These occasions of sin, however, would not follow the dispensations, did not our corrupt natures lay hold on them as such, and abuse them. Thus all God's works of providence or grace may prove temptations to men. The psalmist, speaking of 'the prosperity of the wicked,' intimates that it raised his envy.^f Elsewhere also he considers the blessings of common providence as proving a temptation to carnal security and indifference in religion. Accordingly, it is said concerning some, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.'^g On the other hand, afflictive providences sometimes prove temptations to us to murmur and entertain hard thoughts of God. Moreover, his threatenings are often abused, and made the occasion of thinking him severe and unmerciful. Others complain of his commandments as grievous, because he does not give them those indulgences to sin which their corrupt natures desire. In these respects God may be said to lead into temptation. Yet we are not to pray that he would alter the methods of his providence, or make abatements as to the duties which he commands us to perform: we are rather to pray that he would not suffer us to make a wrong use of them. Again, God leads into temptation permissively. This he does when he does not restrain the tempter, which he is not obliged to do, but suffers us to be assaulted by him, and, at the same time, denies the aids and assistance of his grace, to prevent our compliance with his temptations. Hence, when we pray that he would 'not lead us into temptation,' we desire that he would prevent the assault, or fortify us against it, that, through the weakness of our grace, or the prevalency of corruption, we may not comply with the temptation.

We shall now consider the reason why God thus leads his people into temptation, or suffers them to be tempted; or what are those holy, wise, just, and gracious ends which he designs by doing so. Now, it cannot be expected but that he should thus deal with us, when we choose to go in the way of temptation, or indulge those corruptions whereby we are inclined to yield to it. In this case God's judicial hand appears; as he punishes for one sin, by suffering us to be tempted to another. Again, God hereby gives us occasion to see our own weakness, and the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the need we have of his grace to prevent our falling by temptation. Thus when Hezekiah^h sinned in showing the ambassadors of the king of Babylon the treasures which he had in his house, and so discovered too much pride, while he would have done better to have shown them the bed he lay on when he was nigh death, and taken occasion thence to give God the glory of his miraculous recovery, which was the reason of their being sent to compliment him, it is said, 'God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Again, God acts thus that, when we experience the superior force of our spiritual

^f Psal. lxxiii. 3.

^g Psal. lv. 19.

^h 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, compared with 2 Kings xx. 15.

enemies, we may, by faith and prayer, have recourse to his almighty power and grace. Thus when the apostle Paul was in danger of being 'exalted above measure,' through Satan's temptations, he says, 'For this, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.'ⁱ Further, he acts thus that we may have an evidence of the imperfection of the present state, and be induced to press after and long for that state of perfect freedom, not only from sin, but from temptation, which is reserved for us in heaven. Again, we are led into temptation, that we may see the necessity of making use of the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand our ground. As the soldier will not put on his armour except when he is going to engage the enemy; so God has ordained that our life should be a perpetual warfare, and that we should be continually exposed to the assaults of our spiritual enemies, that we may always be prepared for them, having 'the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'^k He has ordered matters thus also, that we may, in the end, know what it is to conquer, that we may have the pleasure and satisfaction arising thence, and that he may have the glory of the victory. Again, God suffers us to be tempted, that he may cure our sloth, and excite us to greater watchfulness, as those who are never wholly out of danger. Thus the apostle says, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;'^l and our Saviour advises his disciples to 'watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.'^m Finally, God suffers us to be tempted that we may know the depths of Satan, which we should be otherwise unapprized of; and that, in consequence, we may be more prepared to make resistance, and when we are enabled to overcome, may be better furnished to direct others who are liable to similar temptations, how they should behave themselves under them, and to encourage them to hope that they shall be delivered as we have been.

4. It is farther observed that, though God suffers his people to be tempted, and even foiled and led captive, yet he suffers this only for a time. In this respect, the temptations of believers differ from those of the unregenerate. The latter, it is said, are 'taken captive by Satan at his will;'ⁿ but concerning the believer, it is said, that 'only for a season, if need be, he is in heaviness through manifold temptations.'^o

Temptations, and Prayer for Deliverance from them.

We now come to consider what is meant by our praying that God would 'not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' The only difficulty in laying down the method in which this is to be insisted on, arises from the indeterminateness of the word 'evil.' Various senses are given of it by those who explain the Lord's prayer. Some understand by it, the evil one, or the devil. According to this sense of the word, one part of the petition may be considered as exegetical of the other. Hence, not to be led into temptation, is the same as to be delivered from the assaults of Satan, the evil one, that we may not be brought under his power, or become vassals to him, as complying with his temptations. Others, however, understand the word in a more large sense. They view the petition as an intimation of our desiring to be delivered from evil of all kinds,—either from the evil of sin, or from the evil of afflictions, which are the consequence of sin. But as deliverance from the evil of sin respects deliverance from its guilt, and from the punishment which is due to it; the petition, if understood to refer to this, differs little or nothing from the preceding one, in which we pray that God would 'forgive us our sins.' Or if deliverance from the evil of sin be understood as including a part of sanctification, that is, deliverance from the dominion and slavery of sin, the petition, in this case also, is well connected with the preceding one; for when we pray for pardon of sin, we ought also to pray for deliverance from its reigning power. To pray for this is very well connected with our praying against tempta-

i 2 Cor. xii. 8.
n 2 Tim. ii. 26.

k Eph. vi. 14—17.
o 1 Pet. i. 6.

l 1 Pet. v. 8.

m Matt. xxvi. 41

tion; for it is, in effect, to desire either that we may not be assaulted by the tempter, or that we may not be drawn aside by his assaults to sin against God. As for the evil of affliction, I cannot think that is intended by the word 'evil' in this petition; because the opposition between deliverance from it and deliverance from temptation would not appear to be so just as we must suppose it is, unless we take temptation itself to be an affliction. In the latter case, the petition is as if we should say, 'Deliver us from temptation, that we may not be afflicted with it;' for we must suppose ourselves to be afflicted by it, on account of the danger we are in of falling by it. But passing by these critical remarks on the sense of the words, 'Deliver us from evil,' we shall consider the subject of this petition under two general Heads. First, we shall inquire what are the temptations to which we are exposed. Secondly, we shall consider how we are to pray that we may not be led into temptations, or, if led into them, how we may be delivered from the evil consequences of our compliance with them.

I. We shall first inquire what those temptations are to which we are exposed. These are of various kinds; and all take their rise from either the world, the flesh, or the devil. Their manner of acting, indeed, is different; yet they are very often united in their assaults,—whence we are in perpetual danger of being overcome, if God, by his grace, is not pleased to interpose.

1. We shall consider the temptations which we meet with from the world. One class of these are such as arise from the solicitations of those whom we converse with, who, under a pretence of friendship, persuade us to sin. Thus we read of some who 'entice others to lie in wait for blood,' and desire those whom they would ensnare into this crime to 'cast in their lot among them.'^p But we are advised not to consent to their enticements, or to be confederate with them.—Another class of temptations from the world are such as arise from things which present themselves to us, and are allurements to sin in an objective way. These things are not so much the cause as the occasion of sin; and, in many instances, the use of them is lawful, while the abuse alone proves hurtful. Temptations of this latter class are what we shall principally consider at present; and we shall show how the good and evil things of the world, or the various conditions in which we are, whether prosperous or adverse, prove temptations to us.

The good things of the world, namely, its riches, honours, and pleasures, are sometimes a snare to us or an occasion of sin. Thus our Saviour speaks^q of 'the care of this world,' that is, the care either of gaining or of increasing it, and 'the deceitfulness of riches,' as 'choking the word,' so that we receive no advantage by our attendance on it. The apostle speaks of some who had 'forsaken the right way, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,'^r or acted contrary to his conscience for gain. Felix perverted justice for want of a bribe, concerning whom it is said, 'He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.'^s We read of others who 'will be rich,' that is, who immoderately pursue the gain of the world, and who, in consequence, 'fall into temptation, and a snare, and many hurtful lusts.'^t—Moreover, the honours of the world are a temptation to many. Thus our Saviour says, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?'^u Others, again, are ensnared by the pleasures of the world; and are styled 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.'^x Indeed, we often find that the necessary duties or enjoyments of life, such as eating, drinking, and recreation, and the various relations we stand in to others, prove a temptation to us. Many things are temptations, as they are used unseasonably, immoderately, and without a due regard to the glory of God, which ought to be our highest end in all worldly enjoyments. In fact, whatever has a tendency to draw forth our corruption, may be said to be a temptation to us. Sometimes the prosperous condition of others has this effect upon us. Thus Cain, beholding Abel to have a more visible token of the divine regard to his person and offering than he had, hated and 'slew him.'^y Joseph's being a favourite in his father's house, and honoured by God in having divine

p Prov. i. 10—14.

t 1 Tim. vi. 9.

q Matt. xiii. 22.

u John v. 44.

r 2 Pet. ii. 15.

x 2 Tim. iii. 4.

s Acts xxiv. 26.

y Gen. iv. 5, 8.

dreams, gave occasion to his brethren to envy him; who first designed to slay him, and afterwards, out of malice, sold him into Egypt. When Joshua saw Eldad and Medad prophesying, supposing that the gift of prophecy was possessed only by Moses, and that it only was a lessening of his honour for them to pretend to it, he desired that they might be 'forbid.' But he was plainly under the influence of a temptation; for Moses gave him a check, intimating that he did not do well in 'envying' them 'for his sake.'^z—Moreover, we often find that our own condition in the world, when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, proves a temptation. Some are like the vessel which is in danger of being upset by having too much sail, and no ballast to keep it steady. The abundance of this world, without the grace of God to sanctify and set bounds to our affections, will often prove a snare to us. Some are hereby tempted to covetousness, than which nothing is more preposterous, yet nothing more common. The psalmist's advice, 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them,'^a is an intimation that our desires often increase with our substance, so that the more we have, the more we want, and are less disposed to contribute to the necessities of others. We have an instance of this in Nabal, when David sent him an obliging message, and instructed his messengers to 'say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David.'^b Nabal's refusal to comply with David's request showed that he was of a churlish disposition, that his prosperous circumstances in the world were a temptation to his corruptions, and that he had no sense of gratitude for the favours which he had received from David and his men, while they resided in the wilderness, and were conversant with those who kept his flocks there. It would have been a more plausible excuse, had he alleged the danger which might accrue from his compliance with David's request, that it was possible that Saul might hear of it, and deal with him as he had done with Ahimelech and the other priests at Nob for the small respect which Ahimelech had shown to David. He, however, takes no notice of any such danger, but treats David morosely, when he says, 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?' This reply manifested him to be 'a man of Belial,' as Abigail confesses, when she says, 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.'^c—Again, we sometimes find that a prosperous condition in the world is a temptation to God's people to presumption and carnal security. Thus the psalmist says, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.'^d The wicked also are hereby tempted to obstinacy and disobedience. Thus God says by the prophet, to the Israelites, 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.'^e Sometimes, likewise, prosperity tempts to pride, haughtiness, and oppression. Thus the psalmist speaks of some who were 'not in trouble, neither plagued like other men; therefore,' says he, 'pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment.'^f We are not, indeed, to suppose that this is the necessary result of a prosperous state in the world; since that temptation which is only objective, may be guarded against. The pernicious tendency of prosperity arises from the depravity of our nature, and its proneness to abuse the blessings of providence; whence some take occasion to cast off fear, and put the evil day far from them. When, therefore, we pray that the world may not prove a temptation to us, we desire that God would keep us from using any indirect means, either to get or increase our worldly substance, but, on the other hand, enable us to improve what we have to his glory. We pray also that our affections may not be so much set upon it as to alienate them from him; but that we may make it the matter of our deliberate choice rather to be deprived of outward blessings, than to receive them as our only portion, and, by having our hearts set too much upon them, forfeit and be denied an interest in his special and distinguishing love.

We now observe, that the evil things in the world often prove a temptation to us.

^z Numb. xi. 29.
^d Psal. xxx. 6.

^a Psal. lxii. 10.
^e Jer. xxii. 21.

^b 1 Sam. xxv. 6, 8, 11.
^f Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6.

^c Ver. 25

By 'evil things,' we mean afflictive providences. These are inseparable from the present state; for 'man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards.'^g They are either personal or relative. Some are more immediately from God; others from men, as instruments in his hand. Some arise from the experience we have of affliction; others from our expectation or fear of future troubles. All these sometimes prove temptations to us, unless God is pleased to interpose in a way of preventing grace and make them conducive to our spiritual advantage. They prove temptations to us, when we are discontented and uneasy under the hand of God, complaining of the burdens which he is pleased to lay on us, as though they were insupportable, and it were impossible for us to bear up under them; or when we are ready to conclude that no affliction is like ours, and are apt to insinuate that God, in subjecting us to it, deals hardly with us. Again, afflictions prove temptations to us when they disturb or disorder our thoughts, weaken our faith, and unfit us for spiritual meditations, or attending aright on the ordinances of God; or when we are more concerned about our afflictions than about sin, the cause of them. Further, afflictions are temptations to us when we have unbelieving apprehensions concerning the event of them, concluding that they will certainly end in our ruin, notwithstanding the promises which God has made of their working together for good to those who love him. David felt affliction working in this way when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;'^h for what he experienced was an ungrounded fear, especially considering the promises which God had given him, and the many instances he had of his being a help to him in the time of trouble. Again, afflictions are temptations to us, when we take occasion from them to question God's fatherly love, or to conclude that they are sent in wrath, and are intimations that we are cast off by him, when we have no reason to think so from any thing in the nature of the affliction itself; also when we are hindered from applying those suitable promises which God has made to his people under affliction, for their comfort and support. Now, when we pray that God would 'not lead us into temptation,' as afflictive providences expose us to it, we are to pray against them with submission to the divine will. We are not indeed to pray against them as if the removal of them were of as much importance, or as necessary to our happiness, as the taking away of the guilt or power of sin; but we are to pray that they may be sanctified to us, that corrupt nature may not take occasion from them to have unbecoming thoughts of God, and that we may be led by them nearer to himself, so that they may not prove a temptation to us, or at least that, with the temptation, he would make a way for our escape.

2. Another sort of temptations proceed from the flesh. These are the greatest and most dangerous of all. The apostle speaks of them as if they were the only temptations, when he says, 'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.'ⁱ All other temptations might, without much difficulty, be resisted and overcome, were there not a corrupt disposition in our nature, which the apostle calls 'lust,' which inclines us to adhere to them and comply with them. This corrupt disposition of our nature consists in the irregularity and disorder of our passions, which, as the result of our fallen state, are not only prone to rebel against God, but to act contrary to the dictates of our own consciences. The temptations are often various, according to the prevailing bias of our natural temper. A melancholy constitution sometimes inclines us to slavish fears, or distrust of God's providence; or to have such black and dismal apprehensions of our spiritual concerns, that we are led even to the very brink of despair. A cholerick temper prompts us to revenge, injustice, and oppression, and puts us upon magnifying small offences, and expressing a furious resentment without ground. A sanguine and airy constitution often proves a temptation to cast off all serious thoughts about God and another world, to count religion a needless, melancholy, and distasteful thing, and to make a jest of what is sacred and ought to be treated with the utmost reverence. This temper frequently exposes persons to the pernicious influence of bad company, and induces them to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Again, a stupid, phlegmatic, and heavy constitution, often proves a temptation to

g Job v. 7.

h 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

i James i. 14.

negligence in our civil and religious affairs, and not to make provision for a time of trial. Hereby persons are often tempted to neglect holy duties, especially such as are difficult; or to perform them in a careless manner, and so rest in a form of godliness without its power. This difference of natural tempers is the reason why we behold lust appearing in different shapes; so that the same temptation, presenting itself from without, suits the natural disposition of one who eagerly embraces it, while it does not greatly move another. Now, when we pray against those temptations which arise from the flesh, it is not to be supposed that we expect to be perfectly freed from them in this world; for while here, as has been elsewhere observed,^k there are the remnants of sin abiding in every part, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit, even in those who are sanctified. What we pray for is, that God would restrain and prevent the irregularity and pernicious tendency of our natural temper; or that he would keep us from those sins which more easily beset us, by reason of the propensity of our nature to commit them. We pray also that he would sanctify our affections, and bring them under the powerful influence of a principle of grace, which may maintain a perpetual opposition to those habits of sin which are daily leading us to turn aside from God; so that whatever temptations we meet with from objects without us, our souls may be internally fortified against them, and disposed to hate and avoid every thing which is contrary to his holy law, or tends to his dishonour.

3. We shall now consider those temptations which arise from Satan. He is called 'the tempter;'^l and he is also said to 'enter into'^m sinners, and 'fill their hearts.'ⁿ As for the unregenerate, they are wholly under his power. Hence, conversion is called a 'turning them from the power of Satan unto God.'^o There are some, indeed, who deny that Satan has any hand in those temptations to which we are exposed. In this opinion they are too much disposed to adopt the error of the Sadducees of old. If they do not expressly deny the existence of spirits, yet they will not allow that they have any thing to do in this world. Indeed, they think it impossible for the devil to give us any disturbance, seeing he is shut up in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. As to those things which we read in scripture of his doing against men in this world, they suppose that they are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, and that nothing else is intended by them but the temptations we meet with from men or from our own lusts. These, according to them, are the only devils that we need to fear. This error they are led into under a pretence of avoiding the contrary extreme of those who seem to lay all the sins they commit to the devil's charge, rather than their own; when, probably, he has nothing to do with them, and they wholly proceed from their own corruptions. The middle way between these extremes, is, as I conceive, much more consonant to scripture and experience, and rather to be acquiesced in. We shall, therefore, endeavour to prove that we are often tempted by Satan as well as by our own lusts.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that spirits may so far have access to our souls, as to suggest good or bad thoughts. Being reasonable creatures, it is beyond dispute that they are able to converse with one another; and if so, there is no absurdity in supposing, that they may, some way or other, have conversation with the souls of men, which are capable of having things internally suggested to them, as well as of receiving ideas from sensible objects by means of the bodies to which they are united. As to the manner in which this is done, we pretend not to determine it; it being sufficient to our present purpose to make it appear that we are exposed to temptations from Satan, as well as from ourselves. Again, it is obvious from scripture that the devil and his angels are conversant in this lower world. Accordingly, he is styled, 'the prince of the power of the air,'^p 'the god of this world;'^q and elsewhere he is said to 'walk about, seeking whom he may devour.'^r It is objected, indeed, that his being conversant in this world is inconsistent with his being shut up in hell. But this may respect principally his state, as being unchangeably separated and banished from God's favourable and comfortable presence.

^k See Quest. lxxviii.
^o Acts xxvi. 18.

^l Matt. iv. 3; 1 Thess. iii. 5.
^p Eph. ii. 2.

^m Luke xxii. 3.
^q 2 Cor. iv. 4.

ⁿ Acts v. 3.
^r 1 Pet. v. 8.

Now, notwithstanding this, God may suffer him to attempt many things against men in this world, for the trial of the graces of his people, and the punishing of his enemies. There is, indeed, a place of misery allotted for devils, though they may not be at present confined to it. That there is such a place seems to be implied in the request they made to our Saviour, that he would not command them to 'go into the deep;'^s by which it is probable, the place of torment is intended, in which they expect to be for ever shut up after the day of judgment. Hence, they are represented elsewhere, as 'crying out, Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?'^t Again, our first parent, in innocency, was tempted by the devil, who, as has been proved elsewhere,^u made use of the serpent to 'speak to Eve.'^x Our Saviour also was tempted by him, when led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that purpose.^y But neither of these could be said to be tempted by the lusts of the flesh; for their being so was inconsistent with Adam's sinless state, before he fell, and with the sinlessness of our Saviour's nature. It is certain, too, that the temptation offered to each was more than objective; for there were words spoken, and a perverse method of reasoning made use of to ensnare them. Nor could they be tempted by men, for in this respect they were alone. It therefore follows that Satan was the tempter of each. Moreover, there are several other scriptures which expressly prove that Satan has sometimes tempted persons to sin. Thus we read that 'he stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number them.'^z Elsewhere our Saviour tells the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do;' that is, you eagerly commit those sins to which he tempts you. It is farther said, that he was 'a murderer from the beginning;' which cannot be understood otherwise than of his murdering man, by tempting him to sin, and prevailing. It is also said, that 'he abode not in the truth,' and is 'a liar, and the father of it;'^a that is, he deceives us by his suggestions, and prevails on us, when we comply with them, to deceive ourselves.

We may here take occasion to inquire, how we may distinguish those temptations which take their rise from Satan, from others which proceed from ourselves. This question is very difficult to be resolved, for our corrupt nature, for the most part, tempts us to the same sins which Satan tempts us to do. Now, where there are two causes of the same action, it is hard to distinguish one from the other; just as when two candles are set up in the same room, we cannot distinguish the light of the one from the other. If, indeed, the sins to which we are tempted by our lusts on the one hand, and by Satan on the other, had been described as of different kinds, we might more easily determine the difference which there is between them. Or if we had not the least inclination to comply with the temptation, and were able to say, as our Saviour did, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,'^b we might easily know where to fasten the charge of guilt; and it would be no injustice to exculpate ourselves, and lay the blame wholly on the devil. But it is far otherwise with us, by reason of the corruption of our nature; which would render us prone to sin, though Satan did not tempt us to it. Hence, as we often contract guilt by complying with his temptations, just as he does by offering them; it is necessary that something be said in order to our knowing, so far as we are able to determine the matter, when the temptation is to be laid at our own door, and when at Satan's. We observe, then, that when we are tempted to those sins which we cannot think of but with the utmost abhorrence; when we are so far from entertaining any pleasure in the thing to which we are tempted, that we take occasion to express the greatest aversion to it, and would not comply with the temptation for ten thousand worlds; when we count the suggestion an invasion on our souls, an affliction grievous to be borne; and when, instead of complying with it, we are led to the exercise of those graces which are opposite to it; in such cases, I humbly conceive, we do not incur guilt by being tempted, and the sin is wholly to be charged on Satan. On the contrary, when we are pleased with the temptation, frequently meditate on the subject of it, and either commit the sin to which it tempts us, or if we abstain from

^s Luke viii. 31.^t Matt. viii. 29.^u See Sect. 'The Temptation,' under Quest xxi.^x Gen. iii. 1. et seq.^y Matt. iv. 1.^z 1 Chron. xxi. 1.^a John viii. 44.^b Chap. xiv. 30.

the commission of it, do so only out of fear or shame ; and when the propensity of our nature leads us, at other times, to those sins which bear some resemblance to it, then our own lusts, as well as Satan, are causes of the sins which follow.

These things being considered, we shall proceed to speak more particularly concerning Satan's temptations. Here we shall lay down, by way of premisal, some things which relate to this matter ; and afterwards we shall consider the method in which he manages his temptations. Let it be observed, then, that, though Satan may tempt to sin, yet he cannot force the will ; for then the guilt would devolve wholly on himself, and not on us. Our condition would certainly be very miserable, were it impossible for us to resist his temptations ; for we should then lie at the mercy of one who would have more power to destroy us than we would have to withstand him. Besides, this would be to extend the servitude of the will of man beyond its due bounds ; for, though it is not free to what is spiritually or supernaturally good, we do not deny that it is free as to its having a power to avoid many sins, into which, on this supposition, it would be inevitably hurried. It would, moreover, be a reflection on the providence of God, so far to leave man in the hands of Satan that he should be laid under a necessity of sinning and perishing without the choice and consent of his own will, so that his destruction could not be said to be of himself. Again, Satan's power is not equal to his malice ; for he is under divine restraints, and, indeed, can do nothing against believers but by God's permission. This may be argued from our being obliged to desire that God would keep us from being tempted, that is, restrain the tempter, as well as enable us to resist him. If it were otherwise, no one could be saved ; for Satan's malice is boundless, though he is not suffered to do that to which it prompts him. This is a very great blessing to God's people ; as it is a comfortable thing to consider that they are in his hands who is a merciful Father, and not in Satan's power, who breathes forth nothing but revenge and cruelty. Again, as it is not a sin to be tempted, since our Saviour is said to have been 'in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ;'^c so, on the other hand, when we are pleased and comply with the temptation, it will be no sufficient excuse for us to allege that Satan had a great hand in it, since, as we already observed, he can only tempt, but force the will. How formidable soever he may be, by reason of the greatness of his power and malice ; yet we have the expedient to make use of, that we can say, 'The Lord rebuke thee, Satan.' Further, there is a vast difference between the condition of those who are converted, and that of those who are in an unregenerate state, as to the event and consequence of Satan's temptations. The former, indeed, by reason of the remains of corruption in them, are often foiled and overcome by these temptations. Yet they shall not be wholly destroyed ; but God will find out a way for their recovery out of the snare in which they may at any time be entangled. The latter, however, are wholly under Satan's power, by their own choice and consent, and will remain so, till, by the grace of God, they are delivered from the dominion of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

We shall now consider the method in which Satan manages his temptations, in order to his inducing men to sin. Sometimes he endeavours to ensnare and deceive us by his subtilty. On this account he is called 'that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world.'^d Elsewhere we read of 'the depths of Satan,'^e that is, his deep-laid designs ; and of his 'wiles,'^f which it is an hard matter to withstand. He is also sometimes said to be 'transformed into an angel of light,'^g when he tempts to sin under a pretence of our bringing glory to God, as well as good to ourselves and others. There are likewise other methods of temptation in which, though he manages them with equal subtilty, he appears, not as an angel of light, pretending to help us in the way to heaven, but as a roaring lion, rendering himself formidable, and not concealing his design to devour us, or make a prey of us, and to fill us with that distress of conscience which brings us to the very brink of despair. These, it is probable, the apostle intends by his 'fiery darts,' as distinguished from his 'wiles.' In the former, he shows himself a tempter ; in the latter, an accuser. These are the usual methods which he takes in managing his temptations. We shall consider them under four Heads ;—first, his endeavouring

to produce and strengthen the habits of sin ; secondly, what he does to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder the efficacy of conviction ; thirdly, his discouraging those who are under convictions from closing with Christ by faith ; and lastly, his injecting blasphemous and atheistical thoughts into the mind of men, and using endeavours to drive them to despair.

(1.) Satan endeavours to produce and strengthen the habits of sin. These are generally attained by frequent acts, or by making a progress in sin, by which the heart is hardened. It is with greater difficulty that those who contract these habits are reclaimed from them. Of such the prophet speaks, when he says, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.'^h We may observe that Satan does not usually tempt, at first, to the vilest and most notorious acts of sin, especially where he has ground to suspect that his temptations will not be readily entertained or adhered to ; as in the case of those who retain some impressions of a religious education, or are, at present, under the influence of restraining grace. These are first tempted to commit lesser sins before they proceed to greater. He generally begins with tempting to sins of omission, or to formality and indifference in the performance of religious duties, or by pretending that God gives us some indulgences or allowance to commit those to which our natural constitution most inclines us, that we have been mistaken when we have thought that religion is so difficult a matter as some have pretended it to be, that we may safely follow a multitude, though it be in doing that which is in itself sinful,—that we are not to take an estimate of religion from the apprehensions which some melancholy persons entertain of it,—that strictness in religion is being righteous overmuch, and striving against the stream is a needless precaution,—that therefore we may consult our own honour and reputation in the world, and adopt that scheme of religion which is uppermost, and that denying ourselves, taking up the cross and following Christ, though it may be reckoned a safe way to heaven, yet is not the only one. The habits of sin are thus strengthened, the heart hardened, and persons proceed from one degree of impiety to another, till at last they abandon themselves to every thing vile and profligate, and run with others in all excess of riot.

That his design may be more effectually carried on, he suits his temptations to every age and condition of life. As to those who are in the prime and flower of their age, he endeavours to persuade them that it is time enough for them to think of being religious hereafter ; and that religion is too austere and melancholy a thing for them to pretend to at present, and is inconsistent with those pleasures and youthful lusts which are agreeable to their age and condition of life. If they are children, he suggests to them that they have time enough before them ; that when they are more advanced in years, they will have a greater degree of understanding, and be better able to perceive the force of the arguments which are usually brought to induce persons to lead a religious life ; and that then they may make choice of it out of judgment. If they are servants, he persuades them that they have other business on their hands ; that they had better stay till they are free from the engagements which they are, at present, under to their masters ; and that when they are at their own disposal, it will be the fittest time for them to embrace the ways of God. This temptation carries in it the highest instance of presumption, tends greatly to harden the heart in sin, and has been the ruin of multitudes.

When persons are come to years of maturity, being no longer children or servants, but about to engage in those secular employments to which they are called in the world, he has temptations of another nature to offer to them. He has hitherto kept possession of their hearts, and desired them only to wait for this age of life, pretending that then they would have a more convenient season to lead a religious life ; but this convenient season has not yet come, for there are other stratagems of which he now makes use to keep them in subjection to him. Youthful lusts are now grown to a greater height, and the impressions of a religious education, if they were favoured with it, almost worn out ; and it is no difficult matter for him to per-

suade them, that the principal thing they are to be concerned about is their living comfortably in the world, that they have now an opportunity to increase their substance and make provision for their future happiness on earth, and that therefore they ought to converse with those who are in the same station of life with themselves. And he generally points out and tempts them to make choice of such associates as may be a snare to them, whose conversation is very remote from any thing tending to promote religion and godliness. Sometimes he endeavours to make them ashamed of the ways of God, as though to walk in these were inconsistent with their reputation in the world, especially with their present situation or condition. On the other hand, if persons are poor and low in the world, and find it difficult to maintain themselves or families, he persuades them that religion is not the business in which they are called to engage, that they must rather take pains to live,—that God does not require more than he gives, or expect that those should spend a great deal of time in religious duties who have none to spare from that business which is necessary for their getting a livelihood in the world,—and that therefore religion belongs, not so much to them, as to others.

If persons have arrived at old age, the last stage of life, and have, as it were, their latter end in view, being not far from it, according to the course of nature; they are now at that age of life which was formerly pretended by Satan to be the most fit and proper season for entertaining thoughts of religion; and it was in expectation of it that, when they were formerly under any convictions, they generally stifled them by resolving that they would apply themselves to a religious life in old age. Thus has the tempter hitherto beguiled them. But now he has other temptations to present to them, which are suited to old age; and he insinuates that the weakness and infirmities of the decline of life render them unfit for religious duties. Indeed, their hearts have contracted such a degree of hardness, by a long continuance in sin, that it is difficult for anything to make an impression on them. Yet Satan endeavours to persuade them, that, notwithstanding all the wickedness of their former life, and their present impenitency for it, they may hope for salvation from the mercy of God, though they continue still in a state of unregeneracy; and he thus entices them to soul-destructive presumption. Or he tempts them utterly to despair of the mercy of God, and tells them that it is too late for them to begin that work which they have put off to the extremity of life. By either of these methods he effectually brings about their ruin. Thus concerning Satan's suiting his temptations to the several ages and conditions of life.

But we may observe that he also uses methods of temptation which are agreeable to the temper and disposition of those whom he assaults, in order that he may not shoot his arrows at random, without answering the end he designs. By this conduct his subtilty farther appears. Thus he observes those times for tempting men to sin in which it is most likely that his temptations will take effect. Hence his assaults are generally most violent when they are least upon their guard, and give way to sloth and indolence. Or when the Spirit of God withdraws his influences, and when, in consequence, their faith is weak, and they are not able to make great resistance against his temptations, he crowds in a great multitude of them at once, and so lays hold on the opportunity to improve the success which he has gained against them. If they are afraid of the consequences of a compliance with his temptations, he endeavours to stupify their souls, that they may have no present apprehensions of the evil which would follow. Again, he often takes occasion to raise in our minds some doubts about the matter of sin or duty; whether what he is about to tempt us to be lawful or unlawful; or how far a person may venture to go in the way of temptation, and yet maintain his integrity. This is generally the first step towards the commission of those sins to which we are tempted. Again, if shame or fear are like to hinder the success of the temptation, he undertakes to find out some mode of secrecy, whereby public scandal may be avoided. Thus Joseph's mistress tempted him to sin when Potiphar was absent, and 'there was none of the men of the house there within;'ⁱ so that he had no occasion to fear that his crime would be detected. Sometimes he proceeds so far as to insinuate,

that they may even hide themselves from the all-seeing eye of God, and tempts them to say, 'How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.'^k Thus the prophet Isaiah denounces a woe against them that 'seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?'^l This method seldom fails of answering his end. Further, if conscience be awakened, and deters them from adhering to the temptation from a sense of the guilt which they will contract, Satan is sometimes content to take the blame upon himself, that they may think that they are to be excused, by reason of the violence of the temptation, which they could not well withstand. Again, he sometimes persuades them to throw the blame on providence, as being the occasion of sin, or rendering it necessary or unavoidable from our condition or circumstances in the world. This is the highest injury which can be offered to the divine Majesty. Thus Adam tacitly reproaches God, when he says, 'The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.'^m Finally, he often tempts men to presume on the mercy of God, and to hope that, though they continue in sin, they shall obtain a pardon from him. Or, since pardon is not to be expected without sincere repentance, he tempts them to presume that by the influence of the Holy Spirit they shall have the grace of repentance hereafter, whereby their perishing in their iniquities may be prevented. Thus concerning the methods which Satan takes to produce and strengthen the habits of sin.

(2.) We proceed to consider how he endeavours to prevent our being brought under conviction of sin, or, if we are convinced of it, to hinder its making any deep or lasting impression on us. This he does various ways. One way is by dissuading others, who ought to deal faithfully with us, from reproving sin committed by us. Thus Ezekiel, speaking concerning the false prophets, says, that they 'strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.'ⁿ Sometimes he improves the consideration of our circumstances in the world to dissuade us from reproving sin in others, especially if they are our superiors, or those on whom we are dependent, or from whom we have some expectations, lest we should make them our enemies, and lose some advantages which we hope to receive from them. Others he does not wholly dissuade from reproving sin; but there are some circumstances attending the reproof, or the person who gives it, which he makes use of to hinder it from taking effect, so that his end is no less answered than if sin had not been reproofed at all. Thus, when we reprove with too much lenity, those who are notorious offenders, and who ought to be treated with a greater degree of sharpness, and when we speak to them of their offence as if it were only a sin of infirmity, they are only hardened in the commission of it. This was Eli's fault in dealing with his sons, when he said to them, 'Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.'^o Instead of reproofing them in this way, he ought to have restrained them by those acts of severity which the nature of their crime demanded. Satan often prevents the reproof from taking effect, also by inclining the reprover to use indecent behaviour, or to express haughtiness of temper, as if there were no respect due to superiors, as such, because they are worthy of reproof. Or he inclines the reprover to express a kind of hatred against the person reproofed; while hatred ought to be directed principally against the crime he has committed, and care ought to be used to convince the person reproofed that it is love to him, as well as zeal for the glory of God, which moves us to reprove him. Satan often hinders reproof from taking effect, likewise, by tempting those to give it to commit the sin they reprove, or, at least, by persuading those against whom the reproof is directed, that there are other sins equally great with which the reprovers are chargeable, and that therefore they ought to look to themselves, rather than take notice of what is done by others.

Again, Satan hinders the work of conviction, by endeavouring to suppress the

k Job xxii. 13, 14.
n Ezek. xiii. 22.

l Isa. xxix. 15.
o 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24.

m Gen. iii. 12.

preaching of the word, or to prevent the success of it when preached. The preaching of the word is God's ordinary way for convincing of sin; and Satan sometimes stirs up those who are under his power and influence to persecute or suppress it. Thus the apostles were 'commanded by the Jews, not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus;'^p and when they refused to obey this command, they were 'put in prison.'^q This method has been taken, in all ages, by Satan's instigation, with a design to hinder the spreading of Christ's interest in the world. But as, in spite of it, the gospel has, by the blessing of providence, continued to this day, there are other methods which Satan make use of to hinder the success of the word. Sometimes he perverts those who preach it; so that they endeavour to corrupt the word of God, and turn aside the minds of men from that simplicity which is in Christ. At other times he tempts them to be very sparing in reproofing sin, or to reprove it in a general way, as though their only design were to let their hearers know that there are some sinners in the world, and not that they should be brought under conviction of sin themselves. This is done sometimes in compliance with the corruptions of those whom they do not care to disoblige; and others shun to declare some of the most important truths of the gospel, and affect a method of preaching as has not such a tendency to bring real advantage to the souls of men, as when it is delivered with more zeal and faithfulness. Again, Satan endeavours to hinder the success of the word, by stirring up the corruptions of those who attend upon it. For this reason he is represented, by our Saviour in the parable of 'the seed which fell by the way side,' and which 'the fowls came and devoured,' as 'catching away' the word.^r Hearers of the word are, in consequence, not much affected with it, and do not endeavour to retain it in their memories. Sometimes also Satan injects vain thoughts under the word preached. Accordingly, our Saviour, in the parable just-mentioned, speaks of the 'seed that fell among thorns,' and explains it of 'the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choking the word.'^s Sometimes, likewise, Satan endeavours to raise prejudices in the minds of men, against what is delivered; so that plainness of expression, when addressed to the consciences of men, in such a way as has a tendency to bring them under conviction, is contemned, and called a low, mean way of address, and disliked because destitute of that elegance of style, or ingenious turn of thought, which is adapted rather to please the ear than to affect the heart.

By these methods Satan endeavours to hinder persons from being brought under conviction. But if their consciences are, notwithstanding, awakened under the word, or by some providences which God often makes use of for that end; there are methods of another kind, which Satan uses, to prevent convictions from making any deep or lasting impression. Thus he endeavours to make the soul easy, from the consideration of the universal depravity of human nature. He accordingly insinuates, that all have reason to accuse themselves of sins which would tend to their disquietude, if they made a narrow search into their hearts, or had such formidable thoughts of the consequences of sin. Here he produces many examples of persons who have been quiet and easy in their own minds, though they had as much ground to perplex and torment themselves with melancholy thoughts as those who are awakened have; but who, nevertheless, go on in a course of sin, without any checks of conscience, and, as Job says, 'spend their days in wealth,'^t or, as it is in the margin, in mirth, 'and in a moment go down to the grave,'^t being resolved to give way to nothing that shall disturb their peace, or render their lives uncomfortable. If this stratagem will not take effect, inasmuch as the persons awakened are sensible, that while they remain in an unconverted state they can have no solid foundation for peace, then Satan endeavours to persuade them that the work of conversion is over, and that conviction of sin, though unaccompanied by faith, is true repentance, or that a partial reformation, and abstaining from some gross and scandalous sins, or engaging in the external duties of religion, especially with some degree of raised affections, is a sufficient ground for them to conclude that they are in a state of grace. If they resolve to go on in this way, he puts them upon depending and relying on their own righteousness, and expecting to be justified by it,

p Acts iv. 18.

q Chap. v. 18.

r Matt. xiii. 4, 19.

s Verses 7, 22.

t Job xxi. 13.

without seeing a necessity of laying hold on what Christ has done and suffered, in order to the removing of the guilt of sin ; and, so long as they continue in this way, they shall meet with no disturbance from Satan, this not being the method which God has prescribed for our attaining justification, or that peace which flows from it. Again, Satan puts them upon making vows and resolutions in their own strength, that they will perform several religious duties with the greatest exactness, and abstain from those sins which he is sensible they will commit, if not prevented by the grace of God, that so, by too great confidence in their own strength, they may provoke him to leave them to themselves. They, in consequence, soon break their resolutions, and bring themselves under greater perplexities than they were in before. Then to make them easy, he endeavours to persuade them that God does not require them to lead so strict a life as they seemed determined to do, but has allowed them some innocent liberties, as he calls them, in giving way to those sins which their condition in life renders necessary. As he had before tempted them to rely on their own strength, he now tempts them to carnal security, and a slothful, stupid frame of spirit, whereby they will be rendered more receptive of those temptations he has to offer, to turn them aside from that strictness in religion which they before resolved to maintain. Further, Satan dazzles their eyes with the glittering vanities of this world, that he may divert their minds from serious thoughts or any concern about a better. If their secular callings are attended with some encumbrances, through the multiplicity of business, or the constant care they are obliged to take to live in the world ; he alleges how inconsistent it will be to give way to convictions of sin which will be an hinderance to the necessary business of life. Thus concerning the method which Satan uses to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder its efficacy. But as this does not always take effect, especially when convictions make a deep impression upon us,

(3.) We proceed to consider those methods which are used by Satan to hinder persons from closing with Christ, and believing in him. Thus he endeavours to keep them in ignorance of the great doctrines of the gospel, and to turn them aside to embrace those errors which are inconsistent with faith in Christ. He suggests, that to press after the knowledge of the sense of scripture belongs not to them, but to persons of learning, or to those who are called to preach or defend the truth ; and that it is enough for them to have some general notions of the doctrines of religion, whereby they may be induced to practice those moral virtues to which their station in life engages them, while they leave the more abstruse parts of Christian doctrine to those who are inclined to study them. Moreover, he improves the different sentiments of men about the doctrines of the gospel to answer this end ; and infers that, as one asserts one thing for truth, and another the contrary, there is nothing certain in religion ; so that they are safest who keep clear of all controverted matters, among which he includes the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. This method of temptation leads men to scepticism, and, if complied with, is inconsistent with faith in Christ. They, in consequence of it, imbibe those doctrines which tend to sap the very foundation of revealed religion. If they pretend to adhere to any scheme of doctrine, it is generally such as has a tendency to strike at the divinity and glory of Christ, the necessity of his satisfaction, or of our justification by his imputed righteousness, the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the need we have of his powerful operations in the work of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. These are the doctrines on which our faith is built. Hence, to deny them, as it is the result of the alienation of our minds from God, is not only inconsistent with our closing with Christ, but is agreeable to the working of Satan in the children of disobedience, whereby he answers his character, as a deceiver, as well as a tempter.

Satan further endeavours to hinder men from believing in Christ, by persuading them to hope for salvation from the mercy of God, without any regard to the display of this attribute in Christ, as our Mediator, or faith in him, without which we have no ground to conclude that we shall obtain mercy. Or as faith is necessary to salvation, he persuades them to be content with such a faith as consists only in a general assent to some things contained in scripture, without the exercise of other graces which are inseparably connected with, and flow from true

faith. If they are satisfied with such a faith, it is no wonder that Satan, by his false reasoning, carries on the temptation yet farther, and persuades them that faith is in their own power, and that it is an easy matter to believe; and their being persuaded of this is a certain indication that they are destitute of saving faith. Thus we have considered Satan as endeavouring to strengthen the habits of sin, as endeavouring to hinder the work of conviction or to prevent its taking effect, and as using methods to keep those who are under convictions, from closing with Christ by faith.

(4.) We now proceed to consider Satan's injecting atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men, and using his utmost endeavours to drive them to despair. He sometimes injects atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men. His nature inclines him to hate and oppose God; and his malice breaks forth in tempting men to blaspheme his perfections. Thus some are represented as 'opening their mouths in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven;'^u and this they do by the instigation of Satan. There is, however, a vast difference between those blasphemous thoughts which are injected into the minds of wicked men, and those which are often complained of by the believer. The devil stamps his own image upon the former; and they are like a spark falling into combustible matter, which immediately sets it on fire. The latter are like a flash of fire that lights upon water, without doing any execution. We read of some who are entirely under his dominion, who 'blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repent not of their deeds.'^x But there are others into whom he injects blasphemous thoughts, to whom they are a grief and burden. Some are tempted to deny the being or providence of God; and others to have unworthy and injurious thoughts of the divine perfections. Such thoughts cannot be reckoned any other than blasphemy; and so far as they proceed from us, bring with them a very great degree of guilt. That believers themselves have been sometimes guilty of them, appears from what the psalmist utters in words, when he says, 'Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'^y Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for believers to complain of their having injurious and unworthy thoughts of the divine perfections, which they dare not utter in words, and which fill them with the greatest uneasiness. It is therefore necessary for us to inquire, when these blasphemous suggestions take their rise from ourselves, and when from Satan. It is certain that sometimes they proceed from ourselves. Thus our Saviour says, 'Out of the heart proceed blasphemies that defile a man.'^z We have reason to charge ourselves with them, when they arise from or are accompanied with other presumptuous sins; or when we do not strive against them, but rather give way to them, as well as to other suggestions of Satan, and, in consequence, dishonour God, grieve the Holy Spirit, and defile our own consciences. On the other hand, we may humbly hope and trust that they are to be charged on Satan rather than ourselves, when they are the result of some bodily distemper, as in those who are under the prevailing power of melancholy. In such persons it may be observed that when, by the use of natural means, the distemper is abated, and the constitution mended, the blasphemous suggestions cease. Again, blasphemous thoughts are to be charged on Satan, when our souls tremble at the temptation they suggest, and oppose it with the utmost abhorrence, as our Saviour, when the devil tempted him to 'fall down and worship him,' immediately replied to him, 'Get thee hence, Satan.'^a Further, any unholy suggestion is from the tempter, when we can appeal to the heart-searching God, that so far from having any inclination to comply with it, that nothing is more grievous to us, than to be assaulted with it; and especially when we take occasion from it to exercise that reverential fear of the divine Majesty which is opposite to it.

As Satan gives disturbance by blasphemous suggestions, so he uses endeavours to drive persons to despair. We observed under a former Head, that so long as he can persuade any one to take up with a false peace, and fancy himself secure,

u Rev. xiii. 6.
z Matt. xv. 19.

x Chap. xvi. 11.
a Chap. iv. 9, 10.

y Psal. lxxvii. 8, 9.

though going on in a course of rebellion against God, he gives him but little uneasiness, endeavouring rather to increase his stupidity than to awaken his fears. He previously attempted to bring ruin upon him, by suggesting those temptations which led to presumption, and by pretending to him that all things were well, when the ground was sinking under him, and his hope built on a sandy foundation. But, when the frame of his spirit is somewhat altered, and he is brought to a sense of his miserable condition, so that none of those stupifying medicines which have been used will heal the wound; Satan endeavours to persuade him that his condition is hopeless, or that there is no help for him in God. To this temptation believers, as well as the unregenerate, are sometimes liable. Of this we have many instances in scripture, besides those which are matter of daily experience. But it may be observed, that there is this difference between the despairing thoughts of believers and those of the unregenerate, that we scarcely ever read of a believer's despair without finding that it either argued his faith in God, or that there was a mixture of hope which was like a beam of light shining in darkness. Thus the psalmist, in the eighty-eighth psalm, expresses himself like one in the depths of despair; yet it may be observed that he addresses himself to God as 'the Lord God of his salvation.' When the church is represented as saying, 'My hope is perished from the Lord;'^b she is considered afterwards as encouraging herself in him: 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.'^c 'For the Lord will not cast off for ever.'^d On the other hand, the despair of unbelievers is attended with an obstinate resolution to go on in a course of sin, and a total withdrawing of themselves from the ordinances, or instituted means of grace. Thus when Cain complained that his 'punishment was greater than he could bear,' 'he went out from the presence of the Lord.'^e In this case despair, especially if it does not proceed from a bodily distemper, as it sometimes does, is a sad mark of a person's being under the dominion of Satan; who was before a tempter, but now proves a tormentor.

Here we may take occasion to consider how Satan proceeds against men in tempting them to despair. He takes the fittest opportunity, when we are most likely to be overcome by his temptation. He observes our constitution when most addicted to melancholy, and therefore more easily led to despair. He also takes notice of some circumstances of providence under which we are brought, which are more than ordinarily afflictive, and tend to deject and render us more receptive of temptation to despair; and he endeavours to add weight to our burden, and depress our spirits under our afflictions. He also lays hold, more especially, on times when we are under divine desertion, and when, in consequence, our faith is weak, and we are very much indisposed to seek help from God. Moreover, he often takes occasion, from some great fall and miscarriage of which we have been guilty, and by which we have grieved the Holy Spirit and wounded our own consciences, so far to aggravate our crime that we may conclude our state to be altogether hopeless. Again, he endeavours to stop all the springs of comfort which might fortify us against temptation to despair, or afford us any relief under it. Accordingly, he turns our thoughts from the promises of the covenant of grace, and persuades the soul to conclude that they are not made to him, and that therefore he ought not to apply them to himself for his comfort. He also persuades him to determine peremptorily against himself, that he is not elected to salvation; not from any marks of reprobation which he finds in himself, but by entering into God's secret counsels, and pretending to search the records of heaven, into which he has no warrant to look. In acting thus, despair includes a mixture of sinful presumption. At the same time, the person tempted has a secret aversion to converse with those who are able to speak a word in season to him. If any endeavours are used to convince him that the mercy of God is infinite, that his thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that the merit of Christ extends itself to the chief of sinners, they are all to no purpose; for his general reply to all such arguments is, that the mercy of God belongs not to him, or that his iniquities have excluded him from the divine favour. Further, Satan endeavours to hinder a soul, at this time, from waiting on God in ordinances. As for the Lord's supper, he not only dissuades him from attending

b Lam. iii. 18.

c Ver. 24.

d Ver. 31.

e Gen. iv. 13, 16.

on it, but endeavours to insinuate that, in partaking of it in times past, he has 'eat and drank' his own 'damnation.' He thus gives a perverse sense of the passage in Corinthians;^f which, as appears from the context, is to be applied, not to weak believers, but to such as engage in this ordinance in a profane and irreverent manner, as though it were not a divine institution, and without any desire of obtaining spiritual mercies from God while observing it. The word which we render 'damnation' ought to be rendered 'judgment,' denoting that they expose themselves to temporal as well as spiritual judgments in this world for this wickedness, and not that they are to conclude that their eternal damnation will unavoidably follow. Hence, the design of this scripture is to lead to repentance, and not to despair. As for the word preached, the person tempted concludes that every thing which is delivered in it contains an indictment against him; and therefore he cannot endure to hear it. As for prayer, Satan discourages him from it, by pretending that he is not in a right frame for the performance of the duty, and by giving a false sense of such scriptures as these: 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.'^g 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination.'^h But the meaning is not that the duty itself is sinful because performed by sinners, or that God hates them the more for praying; but it is that he hates the hypocrisy, formality, and other sins committed by them, when engaged in it. Hence, they should rather strive and pray against this unbecoming frame of spirit, than lay aside the duty itself, as they are tempted to do. Again, Satan makes use of false reasonings, by which he endeavours to tempt persons to despair. He puts them upon concluding that, because they have no grace, they never shall have it. This reasoning, if it were just, must be applied to all unregenerate sinners; and then we must conclude that the whole work of conversion in this world is at an end. But, blessed be God, it is not. He farther argues that, because they have lived a great while in a course of sin, and their hearts are very much hardened by it, they cannot be brought to repentance; or their wound is incurable, and there are no healing medicines. This is to set limits to the almighty power and grace of God. Satan farther induces them to conclude that there is something uncommon in their case, that they are greater sinners than ever obtained mercy. This, however, is more than it is possible for them to know. Yet they are tempted to apply the presumptuous and discouraging suggestion to themselves to heighten their despair, and to hinder the force of any argument which may be brought to the contrary. But the most common argument which Satan uses to induce persons to despair, is that they have sinned against light and the convictions of their own consciences, that they have grieved and quenched the Spirit of God, and that therefore they have probably committed the unpardonable sin. This is often alleged by persons against themselves, though, at the same time, they know not what this sin is, and regard not any thing which is said to convince them that they have no reason to conclude that they have committed it. Indeed, their very fears, and the desires they express that it were otherwise with them, are an undeniable argument that they are mistaken in the judgment which they pass on themselves, by adhering to Satan's suggestions, leading them to despair.ⁱ Thus we have given some account of the great variety of temptations to which we are exposed from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

II. We are now to consider how we are to pray that we may not be led into temptation, or, if led into it, by what means we may be delivered from the evil consequences which will arise from our compliance with it. An hour of temptation is not only afflictive, but dangerous, by reason of the united assaults of the enemies with whom we have to deal. The world continually presents objects which are agreeable to corrupt nature; and Satan is unwearied in his endeavours to turn us aside from God by means of these objects, in order that he may have us in his own power, and drive us from one degree of impiety to another. Hence, though it is not impossible to be tempted without sin, yet it is exceedingly difficult. As,

^f 1 Cor. xi. 29.

^g Prov. xxviii 9.

^h Chap. xxi. 27.

ⁱ See a particular account what this sin is, and when a person may certainly conclude that he has not committed it, Sect. 'For whom Prayer is not to be made,' under Quest. clxxxiv.

therefore, we are to take heed that we do not go in the way of temptation ; so we are to address ourselves to God, that he would keep us from it, if it be his will. We are not, indeed, absolutely to pray against it, as we are to pray against sin ; for, while it is not possible for us to commit sin without contracting guilt, we may be tempted to sin, and yet come off conquerors over it. But as the enterprise itself is hazardous, the conflict difficult, and the event, with respect to us, uncertain, we should rather desire that, if God has not some gracious ends to answer, by our being subjected to temptation, which are, at present, unknown to us, he would be pleased to prevent it. The case is the same as if we were apprehensive of an infectious distemper raging among us. This we are to pray against ; though God could, by his power, preserve us, in particular, from its evil consequences. Or if we were informed that an enemy lay in wait secretly for our lives, it is possible for God to deliver us out of his hand ; yet if the matter were referred to our own choice, we would rather desire that he may not be suffered to assault us. Thus we are to pray that God would keep us from temptation. We are not, however, to question his power, or distrust his providence, as though he could not carry us safely through it ; and we are to hope that he will do so, if he suffers us to be tempted. Nor are we to suppose that we can be altogether free from those temptations which arise from the imperfection of the present state ; in which we must expect to be subject to the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Hence, we are to direct our prayers to God principally that he would keep us from falling by temptation, or that he would recover us when fallen, prevent the evils which would otherwise follow, and overrule our sinful compliance to his own glory and our future advantage.

1. We are to pray that he would keep us from falling by temptation, that it may be like a wave dashing against a rock, which remains unmoved, or like a dart shot against a breastplate of steel, which only blunts its point, and returns it back without receiving injury. Now God prevents our falling by temptation, either by his restraining or by his renewing grace. The former is common to the regenerate and the unregenerate ; and, when it is unaccompanied with any higher grace, it consists chiefly in some alteration made in the natural temper or present inclinations of men, so that sin, though it remains unmortified, is abstained from, just as a river is kept from overflowing a country, not by ceasing to be fluid in its nature, but by being contained within its proper banks. These restraints, in some, proceed from the change which providence makes in their outward condition or circumstances in the world ; so that temptations which formerly they were ready to comply with, are either discontinued or offered without success. Thus when a person is bowed down with some affliction, it gives a different turn to his passions ; so that, as Job says, 'the heart is made soft,'^k in a natural way, by those troubles which tend to depress the spirits. Sometimes a person is unexpectedly surprised with a fit of sickness, which gives him a near view of death and another world ; and then the violence of any temptation with which he is assailed, for the present, ceases, or at least, he is deterred from complying with it. Or it may be, his spirits are decayed, his constitution weakened, and his natural vigour abated by affliction, so that he has no inclination to commit some sins to which he was formerly addicted. Others want leisure to pursue those lusts to which they are habitually prone, being engaged in a hurry of business, or conflicting with many difficulties for the subsisting of themselves and families. These are not exposed to the temptations which often attend a slothful and indolent way of living. Or it may be, they are separated from their former associates, who have been partners with them in sin, and tempters to it. Sometimes, too, there is a sudden thought injected into their minds, which fills them with an inward fear and dread of the consequence of committing sins which are more gross and notorious. This is the result of an awakened conscience ; whereby persons are kept from the commission of many sins, by the restraints of common providence, though they are, notwithstanding, in a state of unregeneracy, and sin in general remains unmortified.—On the other hand, the believer is preserved by the power of sanctifying grace, whereby an habitual inclina-

tion is wrought in him to detest the sin to which he is tempted. The Spirit of God, by his immediate interposition, internally disposes him to exercise the contrary graces; which proceed from a principle of filial fear and love to God, together with a sense of gratitude for all the benefits which he has received from him. Hence, in repelling a temptation, he says, with Joseph, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'¹

2. We are also to pray that God would prevent the evil consequences which very often follow temptations, that our hearts may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; that we may not willingly yield ourselves bond-slaves to Satan, or take pleasure in those sins which we have been tempted to commit; and that we may not be exposed to divine desertion, how much soever we have deserved it.

3. We are likewise to pray that God would recover us, or bring us out of the pit into which we are fallen; so that Satan may not take occasion, after he has overcome us, to insult us; that we may not be given up to a perpetual backsliding, but that our souls may be 'restored,' and 'led in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.'^m

4. If we have fallen by a temptation, we are farther to pray that God would overrule it to his own glory and our spiritual advantage. Though there is nothing good in sin, yet God can bring good out of it. This he does when he humbles the sinner for it, makes him afraid of going near the brink of the pit into which he fell, and inclines him to be more watchful, that he may not, by indulging some sins, lay himself open to temptations which would lead him to the commission of many others. God's overruling a believer's fall for his good, will also induce him to depend on Christ by faith, sensible of his inability to resist the least temptation without him. It will likewise excite in him the greatest thankfulness to God, who has found a way for his escape out of the snare in which he was entangled; so that he will receive abundant advantage, and God will be greatly glorified.

Thus we have considered God's people as exposed to various temptations, and how, in reference to them, they are to direct their prayers to God, agreeably to what our Saviour has taught us in this petition. That we may farther enlarge upon the subject in our meditations, we may express ourselves to God in prayer to this effect:—"We draw nigh to thee, O our God and Father, as those who are exposed to many difficulties, by reason of the snares and temptations which attend us. We find it hard to pass through the world without being allured and drawn aside from thee by its vanities, or discouraged and made uneasy by those afflictions which are inseparable from the present state. But that which gives us the greatest ground of distress and trouble, and makes us an easy prey to our spiritual enemies, is the deceitfulness and treachery of our own hearts, whereby we are prone to yield ourselves the servants of sin and Satan. Every age and condition of life has been filled with temptations, by which we have been very often overcome. We therefore implore the powerful aids of thy grace, that we may be kept in the hour of temptation. Enable us to overcome the world, to mortify and subdue our corrupt inclinations, and to stand against all the wiles and fiery darts of the devil. Let us not be tempted to presume that we shall be happy without holiness, or that we shall enjoy the benefits which are purchased by Christ, without faith in him. May we also be freed from all unbecoming thoughts of thy divine perfections, and not give way to any temptations which may lead us to despair of thy mercy, which thou art pleased to extend to the chief of sinners. We farther beg, though with submission to thy will, that we may be kept from the temptations of our grand adversary, because we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to resist him. Yet we are confident that we can do all things by thine assistance. If, therefore, thou sufferest us to be tempted, appear in our behalf, that we may be made more than conquerors; and when we fall by temptation, let us not be utterly cast down, but let us be upheld with thine hand, and let thy strength be made perfect in our weakness. And in the end, bring us safely to that happy state where there is neither sin nor temptation; when we shall be delivered from all the evils of the present state, that thou mayest have the glory, and that we may praise thee throughout the ages of eternity."

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

QUESTION CXCVI. *What doth the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us ?*

ANSWER. The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which is, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen," teacheth us to enforce our petitions with arguments, which are to be taken, not from any worthiness in ourselves, or in any other creature, but from God; and with our prayers, to join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency; in regard whereof, as he is able and willing to help us, so we by faith are emboldened to plead with him that he would, and quietly to rely upon him that he will fulfil our requests, and to testify this our desire and assurance, we say, "Amen."

As we are taught to begin our prayers with those expressions of reverence which become the majesty of God when we draw nigh to him; so we are to conclude them with a doxology, or an ascription of that glory which is due to his name. Thus praise is joined with prayer; and we are encouraged to hope that he will hear and answer our petitions. In the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, we are directed to ascribe to God 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever,' and to sum up all with the comprehensive word, 'Amen.' This doxology may be considered in two respects,—as we express by it the due regard we have to the divine perfections; and as we improve or make use of the clauses of it as so many arguments or pleas in prayer.

I. We shall consider the doxology as expressing the sense we have of the divine perfections.

1. We say, 'Thine is the kingdom.' Here God's sovereignty and his universal dominion over all creatures are acknowledged, as he has a right to every thing to which he gave being. As this is more especially a branch of his relative glory, since the idea of a king implies subjects over whom his dominion is exercised; so it supposes in us an humble expression of subjection to him, and dependence on him for all things which we enjoy or hope for. We also consider him as having a right to make use of all creatures at his pleasure; inasmuch as the earth is his, and the fulness thereof. As we are intelligent creatures, we profess our obligation to yield obedience to his revealed will, and our fear of incurring his displeasure by rebelling against him, with whom is terrible majesty. And when we take a view of him as seated on a throne of grace, and of his government as extended to his church, on which account he is adored as 'King of saints,'ⁿ we hope for his safe protection, and for all the blessings which he bestows on those whom he governs in a way subservient to their everlasting salvation.

2. We adore him as a God of infinite power, 'Thine is the power.' Dominion without power will not be sufficient to maintain its rights. Hence, as God is described as having the kingdom belonging to him, or as being the Governor among the nations, his attribute of power ought to be next considered; whereby he can, without the least difficulty, secure the welfare and happiness of his subjects, and bring to nought the designs of his enemies; or as it is elegantly expressed, 'look on every one that is proud, and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place, hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret.'^o

3. It is added, 'Thine is the glory.' This expression may be understood in two senses. The 'glory' may be viewed as including all his perfections, whereby he is rendered glorious in the eyes of angels and men; so that there is nothing which we esteem beautiful or excellent in the whole system of created beings, but what is deformed, and, as it were, vanishes and sinks into nothing, when compared with him. Or the meaning of the expression is, that all the praise which arises from every thing done in the world which appears great and excellent, or which has a tendency to raise our esteem and admiration, is to be ascribed to him. In ascribing to him this praise, we disclaim the least shadow or appearance of divine honour; which we are ready, on all occasions, to acknowledge to be due to him alone. Thus we adore him as having all divine perfections, when we say, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.'

4. It is farther added, that they belong to him 'for ever and ever.' By this expression, it is intimated that, whatever changes there may be in the nature or con-

dition of created beings, he is unchangeably the same ; and therefore will remain glorious in himself, and be for ever admired and adored by all his saints, whose happiness depends upon his immutability.

II. We shall consider these divine perfections, as they afford us so many arguments or pleas in prayer, whence we take encouragement to expect a gracious answer from him. That they are to be viewed in this light, appears from the illative particle 'for,' which is prefixed to the doxology. We may hence consider the doxology as subjoined to the petitions, as the strongest motive to induce us to hope that the blessings we pray for shall be granted us. Accordingly, we disclaim all worthiness in ourselves, and desire that our name or righteousness should not be mentioned, but that the whole revenue of glory may redound to God, as all our expectation is from him. We might here apply the several arguments or pleas contained in the doxology to every one of the petitions ; and, if thus applied, they would tend very much to enforce them, and afford matter for enlargement in prayer. But I choose rather to reduce the subject of them to the two general Heads, under which they are contained. Accordingly, I shall show how we may make use of them in our praying for those things which concern his glory, agreeably to what we are directed to ask for in the three first petitions ; and how we may make use of them in our praying for temporal or spiritual advantage, agreeably to what we are directed to ask in the three last.

1. As to the glory of God in the world, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom advanced, and his will be done, we pray that, as he is a great King, the blessed and only Potentate, the Governor of the world and the church, he would sanctify his glorious name ; that his interest may be maintained, and prevail against every thing which opposes it ; and that he would take to himself his great power and reign. And, as the success of the gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom of grace, is a work surpassing finite power, and there are many endeavours used to weaken and overthrow it ; we trust, we hope, we plead with him, for the glory of his name, that he would check and defeat the designs of his and our enemies, that the enlargement of his kingdom may not be obstructed, nor his subjects disheartened, while Satan's kingdom, which is set in opposition to it, makes such sensible advances and prevails so much against it. Moreover, in order that his name may be sanctified by his people, and his kingdom advanced in the world, we pray that his subjects may be inclined to obey him and submit to his will in all things, or that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hence, when we ascribe the kingdom, power, and glory to him, we in effect, say :—" Lord, what would become of this wretched world, if it were not under thy gracious government, which is its glory and defence ! Thou sittest on the throne of thy holiness, which thou hast established of old. We are, therefore, encouraged to hope that thou wilt not forsake thy people, who are called by thy name, nor suffer thine interest to be trampled on, or thy name to be profaned by those who say, ' Who is the Lord, that we should obey him ? ' Thine arm is not shortened, that thou canst not save ; for thine is the power, and therefore nothing is too hard for thee. Thou hast given us ground to expect that thou wilt show thy people marvellous things ; and thou hast promised that all nations shall bow down before thee and serve thee, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ. This thou canst easily accomplish by thine almighty power, though it be too hard for man. Thou art never at a loss for instruments to fulfil thy pleasure ; for all things are in thy hand. Nor, indeed, dost thou need them ; for by thy powerful word, thou canst cause light to shine out of darkness, and revive thy work in the midst of the years, that thy people may rejoice and be glad in thy salvation. Take the work, therefore, into thine own hand, and, thereby, give us occasion to admire and ascribe to thee the glory which is due to thy name."

2. We are to consider how we may plead for temporal or spiritual blessings, as making use of the argument that the kingdom, power, and glory belong to God. Accordingly, we pray that he would give us that portion of the good things of this life which he sees necessary for us, and that we may enjoy his blessing with it, in order to our being prepared for a better. We say, in effect :—" Give us daily bread ; for the earth is thine, and the fulness thereof. Thou hast subdued us to thyself, and hast told us that thou wilt surely do us good, and bring us at last to

thy heavenly kingdom. We therefore humbly wait upon thee, that we may not be suffered to faint by the way, or be destitute of those blessings which are needful for us in our present condition. Thou art able to supply all our wants. We have hitherto been upheld by thy power, and thou hast sometimes done great things for us, which we looked not for, and hast been our refuge and strength, a very present help in every time of trouble. Thou hast granted us life and favour; and thy visitations have preserved our spirits. What thou hast given us we have gathered; thou hast opened thy hand, and filled us with good. And, as the treasures of thy bounty are not exhausted, nor thy power diminished; so we desire to exercise a constant dependence on thee, and to hope in thy mercy, that, as thou hast given us those better things which accompany salvation, thou wilt also bestow upon us what thou seest needful for us in our way to it. Grant us, O Lord, the mercies which we need, that the bestowal of them may redound, not only to our comfort, but to thy glory, who givest food to all flesh; for thy mercy endureth for ever."

We also encourage ourselves to hope for those spiritual blessings which we stand in need of. Accordingly, when we pray for forgiveness of sin, we consider God as sitting upon a throne of grace, and inviting us to come and receive a pardon from his hand. Hence, we say, "Lord, thou art ready to forgive, and thereby to lay eternal obligations on thy subjects, to love and fear thee. If thou shouldst resolve to display thy vindictive justice, in punishing sin according to its demerit, thy kingdom of grace would be at an end; but thou encouragest us to hope for forgiveness, that hereby grace may reign through righteousness unto life eternal. And, as thou art a God of infinite power, we beg that thou wouldst work in us those graces which flow from, and are the evidences of, our having obtained forgiveness, that being delivered from the guilt of sin, we may walk before thee in newness of life. We also ask this privilege, as what thou bestowest for Christ's sake, that hereby he may be glorified as the purchaser of this blessing, and we laid under the highest obligations to love him, being constrained by his love, expressed to us in washing us from our sins in his own blood."

When we pray to be kept from temptation, or to be recovered when fallen, we consider ourselves as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and his enemies as endeavouring to draw us aside from our allegiance to him; and dreading the consequence of their seductions, we address ourselves to him, to secure us from the danger we are exposed to from them. Accordingly, when we say, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,' we are furnished with arguments adapted to our present exigencies; and we pray to this effect:—"The power of our spiritual enemies is great, and is specially formidable on account of the treachery of our own hearts; yet we are encouraged to implore thine assistance against them, O our God and King, that we may be kept in the hour of temptation; inasmuch as all the attempts which are made against us include an invasion on thy sovereignty and dominion over us. We desire always to commit ourselves to thy protection, and hope to find it. For there are no snares laid for us but thou art able to detect them, and prevent our being entangled by them. Thou canst also bruise our enemies under our feet; and if we are at any time overcome by them, thou canst recover us from the paths of the destroyer. Do this for us, we beseech thee, that thou mayest have all the glory. We have no might; but our eyes are toward thee, who art able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy."

The word 'Amen,' with which our Saviour concludes this prayer, is of Hebrew origin. It is sometimes prefixed to what is asserted with a vehemency of expression, and is designed not only to confirm what is said, but to bespeak for it the utmost attention, as being a matter of very great importance. In this case it is rendered by the word 'verily.' It is also sometimes repeated in order to add greater force to the confirmation. Thus when our Saviour asserts the necessity of regeneration, he says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'^p Elsewhere, also, he says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.'^q—Again, it is placed at the close of each of the evangelists, to denote, that whatever is contained in the narrative is to be depended on as of infallible verity. Almost all the epistles also

are concluded with it. In the book of Revelation, it is placed after a short prayer or doxology; and, in that position, it signifies that what is requested of God is earnestly desired, and that the petition is summed up and ratified by it; or that the glory which is ascribed is again acknowledged to belong to God, and that we rejoice in the discovery of it which is made to us.—Again, the word is sometimes not only used, but at the same time explained, as containing a summary account of what we ask for. Thus when Benaiah preferred a petition to David in behalf of Solomon, and had a grant from him that he should reign in his stead; it is said, ‘He answered the king, and said, Amen; the Lord God of my lord the king say so too.’^r

Thus, then, the word ‘Amen,’ with which this and other prayers are to be concluded, signifies, ‘so it is,’ ‘so let it be,’ or, ‘so it shall be.’ In all these significations it is to be used in reference to the subject of our prayers. As it respects sins confessed, or the glory which we ascribe to God for mercies received, it denotes, ‘so it is.’ As it refers to the promises which we plead and take encouragement from, or the blessings which we desire, it signifies, ‘so it shall be,’ and ‘so let it be.’ Thus it is to be applied in the Lord’s prayer. In particular, as it is immediately subjoined to the doxology, ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever,’ it is an expression of our faith, as well as of our adoration of the divine perfections.—Moreover, there are some prayers, or doxologies, in which the glory of Christ and the gospel state is described, which are concluded with the repetition of the word. Thus when the psalmist had been enlarging on this subject, he concludes with, ‘Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen;’ that is, God has determined that it shall be so, and the whole church is obliged to express their faith, and say, ‘Amen, so let it be.’

Some have thought it expedient in social prayer, that the whole assembly, together with him who leads the devotions, should say ‘Amen,’ with a loud voice, and thereby signify their consent to the prayer, and their concern in its petitions. This appears to have been the practice of the church in the early ages. Justin Martyr observes that the practice was followed in his time;^s and it was afterwards observed in Jerome’s time, who compares the sound which the assembly made with their united voices to that of thunder.^t But though this practice was followed with a pious design, and was not in the least to be blamed, yet it is not to be insisted on as necessary; for all who are present professedly join in every part of the prayer, as much as if they repeated the words with an audible voice. It is sufficient for every one, when prayer is publicly concluded with this comprehensive word, to lift up his heart to God, and thereby express the part he bears in the devotion. As to the contrary extreme, when one, whose office was altogether unknown to the primitive church, is appointed to say ‘Amen’ in the name of the whole congregation, it is, I think, altogether unwarrantable. Several Popish commentators, indeed, defend it from the apostle’s words, where he speaks of him who ‘occupieth the room of the unlearned,’ as ‘saying Amen, at the giving of thanks.’^u Here, however, by ‘the unlearned,’ is meant, not the clerk of a congregation,^x but one who understands not the prayer, which the apostle supposes to be put up to God in an unknown tongue. All therefore which can be inferred from the apostle’s words is, that we ought to pray to God with understanding and faith, and so may be able to sum up our requests, and glorify him by saying, ‘Amen.’

^r 1 Kings i. 36.

^s Vid. Justin Martyr, Apol. ii. pro Christ. He intimates that, when public prayer and giving of thanks was ended, the whole congregation testified their approbation by saying, ‘Amen.’ Πας ὁ παρων λαος επευφημει λεγων αμην.

^t Vid. Hieron. in lib. ii. Comment. ad Galat. in Proem. Ad similitudinem cælestis tonitrus reboat, [scil. Ecclesia] Amen.

^u 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

^x Vid. Whitby in loc.



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